THE INFLUENCE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION ON EDUCATION SUPPORT OF ETHNIC STUDENTS AS PERCEIVED BY ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS IN SELECTED PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER, REGION 20, TEXAS

A Dissertation

by

NANCY JEAN FALDIK

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2011

Major Subject: Educational Human Resource Development

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ABSTRACT

The Influence of Special Education on Education Support of Ethnic Students as Perceived by Administrators and Teachers in Selected Public Schools in Education Service Center, Region 20, Texas. (August 2011)

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The purpose of this study was to identify educators' beliefs indicating the most preferred support for students with disabilities in the general education classroom setting. This study examined professional educators' attitudes regarding four student supports (motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues) for students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. In addition, the goals of this study included public school educators' attitudes toward the aforementioned four areas of support, specifically within three student ethnic groups (Hispanic, African American, and Whites). The final goal of the study was to compare the attitudes of each of the organizational roles (administrators, general education teachers, special education teachers, and others) regarding motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues of students with disabilities participating in general education inclusive classrooms.

The findings from this research indicate:

1. Educators perceive accommodations/modifications to be the most beneficial support to offer all students with disabilities in the general education inclusive classroom.
2. Educators perceive accommodations/modifications to be the most beneficial support to offer all students with disabilities in the general education inclusive classroom, regardless of ethnic origin. The results of this study reveal no difference in educators' attitudes within the three student ethnic groups.
3. Administrators, general education teachers, and the organizational role of other professionals in the school believe the primary focus for student support in the inclusive classroom should be on incorporating appropriate accommodations/modifications.
4. Special education teachers perceive academic improvements (differentiated instruction) as their first preference of student support for children with disabilities in the inclusive classroom.

The overall findings in this study clearly reveal a pattern of educators' preferences regarding the four student supports for students in special education programs. Accommodations/modifications is the first focus of support for educators to implement, followed by academic improvements (differentiated instruction). The pattern continues with educators indicating motivation to be the third student support and social issues to be the fourth preference.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this doctoral dissertation to my loving parents, Frankie and Miladie Faldik. I am blessed to have you, and I am grateful for all that you have done for me.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Public education was transformed in 1975 with the introduction of Public Law 94-142. This law is called The Education for all Handicapped Children Act (EHA). The EHA ensures a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for students having physical and/or mental disabilities. These children are eligible for FAPE from birth through 21 years of age. The EHA was revised and renamed many times. In 1990, it became known as The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The law was modified again in 1997, with a process-oriented emphasis on mainstreaming and reacting to student failure. With the introduction of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, which became law in 2002, IDEA, the nation's special education law, was again revised and renamed, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). It is now a more product-oriented model, focusing on early intervention and student achievement through inclusion. Prior to the introduction of special education law, there were no set guidelines on how students with disabilities would be taught; states were left to develop programs on their own. This lack of regulation resulted in students losing out on educational opportunities afforded their peers. IDEIA opens the doors for students to receive special education in an inclusive environment.

Over the last 30 years, the number of students being serviced under the Special Education umbrella has grown tremendously. In that time, educational programs have varied significantly (Grossman, 1995). Today, trends support practices of inclusion,

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This dissertation follows the style of *The Journal of Educational Research*.

where children in special education are serviced in a classroom setting with the least amount of restrictions imposed on the student. The least restrictive environment in a public school is the general education classroom. Some students still receive pull-out services, where they are taken out of the classroom for a set amount of time stated in their Individualized Education Program (IEP). A pull-out service is a more restrictive environment. General education classrooms are generally comprised of students with a range of abilities. Grossman (1995), an expert in education for at-risk students, stated that as a result of inclusion, these individuals often fall behind in school and experience difficulty with behavior. Many times these students are placed in special programs that do not meet their individual needs. Additionally, for many years now, the behavior of teachers and administrators toward low socio economic status and non-European special education students in inclusion programs reflects biases that exist in the larger society (Grossman, 1995). Regardless of these existing limitations, special education students are receiving research-based interventions within a program tailor-made for each individual. In addition to special education regulations and the effect they have on classrooms and students, this study examined the areas of motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues for students who participate in special programs. In a bulletin to their teachers, The Alabama Federation Council for Exceptional Children states that motivation is a key to student engagement and academic success (McKeachie, 1999).

McKeachie (1999) noted that the importance of success for humans lies in a central theme of motivation. People typically receive pleasure from doing things well

and, consequently, develop a sense of competence or worth. Individuals who do not experience success feel frustrated and quit trying. Therefore, motivation is an integral part of productive classrooms that is contingent on the teacher and overall school climate (Ash, 2007). Teachers play a considerable role in student motivation by making the subject matter relevant and challenging and facilitating interest through intrinsic and extrinsic task-related incentives. Encouraging motivation is an essential for effective teaching (Ash, 2007).

Darrow (2007) found there were numerous changes that teachers can implement to improve the learning of students with disabilities. Many students with disabilities need individual adaptation(s) to be successful. Some adaptations may be achieved in the form of variations made in the teaching method used. In addition, the classroom environment could be altered. The teacher should consider the child's current academic functioning levels. This can be used as a guide to develop alternate interventions, modifications, and accommodations needed for student support (Darrow, 2007).

Williams (2001) found an increasing number of individuals in special education are being placed in general education setting. Classroom success can be achieved by implementing changes to the existing curriculum. Some changes are as simple as preferential seating or proximity control. Other modifications may be incorporated as to the way a lesson is actually presented. Students may also be given the opportunity to respond in a variety of ways so that it reflects what they have been taught (Williams, 2001). For special education students, these variations for learning must be individualized. The individual's modifications should be developed while keeping their

academic strengths and weaknesses in mind, as well as learning styles and interests. The overall level of motivation increases among the students when they are successful. As a whole, scores will improve (Darrow, 2007). Leaman (2007) noted that effective use of academic improvements such as differentiated instruction for students with learning disabilities is useful to teachers working with pupils with a variety of learning abilities. Meeting the needs of all students in an inclusive classroom makes teaching a dichotomy because the needs of regular education students and students with disabilities must be met.

Students can also have disabilities such as an emotional disturbance (ED) and/or other health impairments (OHI). These individuals, too, frequently have inappropriate behaviors that interfere with their relationships with other students and adults (Gresham, 2002). Failure in social relationships can result in low self-esteem, rejection, and academic failure (Kupersmidt, Coie, & Dodge, 1990). School districts overall, must implement changes in classroom teaching to better support our students with disabilities and to meet their current identified needs. In the *New York Times*, Shriver and Weissberg (2005) reported students' social and emotional skills play a critical role in school. They found that social programs and positive behavioral supports can significantly improve an individual's academic achievement. Students' classroom behavior is more appropriate and less disruptive when effective social relationships are formed with other students and adults. Perhaps there should be a balance of students in every classroom. Schools need to avoid tracking students based on achievement levels because lower achieving students are placed on the same path as other lower achieving students and do not get the

opportunity to interact with their higher achieving peers (Gibson, Gandara, & Koyama, 2004).

Weinstein (1997) found that African American students, especially males, were more likely than Hispanic and Anglo students to be referred for further assessment for multiple reasons including academic, behavioral concerns, speech, and language. Weinstein further recognized the Committees on Special Education (CSEs) were a more effective gatekeeper for Anglo students and females than for African American students or males, once again leaving African students, particularly males, at a disadvantage. In many school districts, African Americans have a higher percentage in special education than Anglo students. There was concern expressed in the literature on special education ethnic groups that public school systems were not adequately providing for the special needs of students with disabilities (Bowman, 1990; Esterly & Griffin, 1987; Kagan, 1991).

Cummins (1984) studied explanatory hypotheses that have been suggested to account for the underachievement of students of color. These explanatory ideas regard minority achievement as a function of (a) inferior quality education provided to students of color, (b) cultural mismatch between home and school, and (c) factors associated with socio-economic status. In 1999, Bennett noted that approximately 25% of school children are students of color. Judging by those statistics, it is estimated that by the year 2020, the numbers of ethnic students will rise to 30%. It is estimated that over 20% of this country's students live in poverty conditions (Bennett, 1999). Because of the direct link between poverty and cultural/ethnic background, students of color face compounded

risks at school (Patton, Blackbourn, & Fad, 1996). Furthermore, due to the risks ethnic students face in special education programs that exhibit emotional disturbance in class, often pose dangerous situations for both the students and teachers in the classroom (Wolery, 1991; Wolery, Strain, & Bailey, 1992).

Meir (1992) suggested all teachers implement sound teaching methods, which are effective regardless of learner characteristics, abilities, and backgrounds. Grossman (1995) noted that many supporters of the theory of cultural/educational disadvantages believe that it is possible to offset these disadvantages by implementing effective teaching practices. Implications for schools is the pressing need to become responsive to students' diverse needs and make pedagogical shifts to support students to help them experience academic success.

Statement of the Problem

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) (1993) indicated that the disproportionate participation of cultural and ethnic students of color in special education classes has been a persistent and disturbing problem for those concerned with special education. Schwartz (1990) stated that the disproportionate overrepresentation of students of color as "emotionally disturbed" and "learning disabled" (p. 157) has been paralleled by their under representation in programs for the gifted and talented. According to Agada and Obiakor (1994), educators must better prepare our students of color to educational goals. Marshall and Glover (1992) cited the Citizens Commission on Civil Rights and reported that many African American youth especially males are born into a life of poverty and that often these children have no positive role models to

serve as mentors. Any given principal's general knowledge of special education law and administrative role had been explored to some degree (Hillman, 1988; Schmidt, 1987); however, the principal's attitudes toward school-based programs for students with disabilities had limited presentation in the literature (Rose & Smith, 1992).

Purpose of the Study

This research investigated the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding education support to understand different ethnic groups in special education in selected public schools in Education Service Center, Region 20, Texas. In addition, this study examined factors that impact African American students in special education compared to Anglo American and Hispanic students in special education in relationship to academic achievement as perceived by administrators and teachers in selected public schools in Education Service Center, Region 20, Texas.

The research questions in this study are as follows:

1. How do campus professional staff members as a whole perceive motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues regarding special education students in selected schools in ESC Region 20, Texas?
2. How do campus professional staff members perceive motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues regarding special education students when controlling for three student ethnic groups (Hispanic, African American, and White) in selected schools in ESC Region 20, Texas?

3. How do campus professional staff members perceive motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues regarding special education students when controlling for the four organizational roles (special education teacher, regular education teacher, other teacher, and administrator) in selected schools in ESC Region 20, Texas?

Operational Definitions

For the purpose of this study, key terms are defined as follows:

Academic improvements: Differentiated instructional methods used to assist students in mastering skills.

Accommodations: Supplementary aids and services that a student may require to be successful in the classroom, such as a study carrel.

Administrators: Includes the principal, assistant principals, campus instructional leaders, counselors, and special education supervisor at identified public schools.

Education Service Center, Region 20: A service agency in Texas that assists schools with overall campus programs and student achievement.

Education support: Provided through academic enhancements such as curriculum, instructional practices, staffing, materials, motivation, strategies, accommodations/modifications, technologies, and social techniques.

Elementary school: Public school grades K-5.

Ethnic student: For the purpose of this study, three ethnic groups: African American (or Black), Hispanic Americans (or Cuban, Latin, Mexican), and Anglo Americans

(or White, Caucasians), are determined by ethnic code of Education Service Center, Region 20, Texas.

Extrinsic motivation: External rewards to a person such as grades or money.

H. Oliver King Special Education Assessment Survey: A special education assessment survey instrument developed in the spring of 2001 by a panel of experts and a doctoral student. Guidelines found in *Educational Research: An Introduction* (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996) were used to develop this special education assessment survey.

Impact: The effect of one thing on another.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): The federal guidelines that are used to determine most decisions regarding special education in the United States, including the least restrictive environment concept (Council for Exceptional Children, 1999).

Influence: Having the ability to sway or affect the decision of another.

Intrinsic motivation: When people engage in an activity, without external incentives, such as satisfaction or accomplishment.

Least restrictive environment: Children with disabilities are educated with students without disabilities in the same learning environment.

Modifications: Individualized changes made to curriculum content and mastery level for children.

Motivation: An incentive, motive, or inducement, especially for an act.

Multicultural education: Implementation of educational goals and methods that teach students the value of cultural diversity (Woolfolk, 1990).

Perceptions of Educational Professionals about Special Education Students: Special education survey instrument developed by this researcher in the summer of 2006. The instrument is a modified version of the H. Oliver King Special Education Assessment Survey.

Selected demographic variables: Basic demographic data, such as years of experience in education, gender, ethnicity, and organizational role of administrators and teachers.

Social issues: The ability to interact with other people and function in groups.

Special education: That portion of the school's instructional program directed toward providing an education for children with disabilities that compares as nearly as possible to that provided for students without disabilities (Barbacovi & Clelland, 1977).

Teachers: The teachers in grades kindergarten through 12 in public schools.

Assumptions

For the purpose of this study, the following assumptions were made by the researcher:

1. The instrument(s) used in this study provided data that were valid for the purpose of this study.
2. The participants surveyed understood the survey instrument and had the ability to self-report.

3. The respondents in this survey answered objectively and honestly.
4. The data obtained by the instrumentation offered an accurate description of the impact of special education on education support for ethnic students.
5. Detailed explanation of the data correlated with the researcher's intentions.

Limitations

The roles of the administrators and teachers as established may affect the survey participants' responses to the survey questions regarding the education support given to special education students. The method of data collection is not the most reliable method available. No coding was used on participants' individual surveys for this study.

Significance of the Study

The results of this research will tell us the perceptions of administrators and teachers in selected public schools with regard to ethnic groups in special education. Despite a popular belief that education is still the primary means for ensuring a literate electorate and an enduring democracy, the review of the literature revealed that public school education in America quite frequently has been used as a tool to promote the values of the majority (Luft, 1995).

Multicultural education programs can be a tool to help transform our country's public school systems (Patton, Blackbourn, & Fad, 1996). Multicultural educational programs strive to provide equal learning opportunities for all children. By incorporating multicultural education programs, public schools and classrooms will be comprised of diverse ethnic individuals (Banks, 1994).

Motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues are many times the education tools that are used in the classroom by teachers. But what are the most beneficial of those factors for mastery of skills with ethnic groups of special education students? The value of this study lies with the results that may assist educational practitioners and policymakers in making decisions based on students' academic performances rather than their ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The data may assist administrators and instructional leaders in planning staff development focusing on multicultural sensitivity training.

Contents of the Dissertation

The dissertation is comprised of five chapters. Chapter I includes an introduction to the study, a description of the problem, and the purpose of the study. Three research questions, specific definitions, and an explanation of the importance of the research complete the contents for Chapter I. Chapter II provided a summary of results from previous literature, citing research on the influence of special education on educational support of ethnic students as perceived by administrators and teachers in selected public schools in Texas. The population of the participants used in the study was described in Chapter III. Additionally, specific procedures used in the study are addressed in Chapter III. Chapter IV is comprised of detailed data analysis obtained from the participants responses. Chapter V consists of a summary, conclusions, and recommendations based on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter consists of a review of the literature on motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues of public school students. This chapter also references literature specifically addressing the benefits of each of these support areas in the classroom for students. Chapter II concludes with a review of literature regarding three ethnic student groups' participation in special education programs. With the increasing diversity and accountability in our contemporary public schools, educators must remain committed to implementing the most beneficial strategies and interventions with the hopes of providing high quality education for all children, including our ethnic student groups participating in special education programs. As a result, teachers and administrators are searching for the most productive supports for a variety of cultural backgrounds and diverse learning profiles. While these supports have been accepted and documented in the literature pertaining to students in general, there remains room for empirical data and theoretical momentum to address the impact of each support area pertaining to identified ethnic student groups in special education inclusion programs.

Motivation

Public schools today support practices of inclusion. IDEA mandates that children in special education programs be serviced in a classroom setting with the least amount of restrictions imposed on the student. The task of defining and creating a least restrictive environment that is successful for special education students is a complex one. Research

has shown that creating a positive learning environment is important for students. Eccles, Wigfield, and Schiefele (1998) believe that personal motivation of students, especially during the elementary years, is shaped by their teacher and classroom environments that surround them.

Hermitt (2007) contends during early childhood education, motivation comes naturally for many individuals. Education excites elementary school age children and they become curious in the classroom. Academic integrity and higher student expectations are anticipated to occur in the elementary school years versus secondary grade levels. Anderman and Maehr (1994) warn that students often exhibit a "disturbing downturn" in motivation in grades six through eight. As students grow older, motivation in school diminishes. Regardless of the level of education, maintaining motivation and student commitment to academics involves educators being creative in the classroom. Teachers must find ways to keep students interested in class (McKeachie, 1999). McKeachie (1999) asserts a creative classroom environment, interesting bulletin boards, and attractive instructional materials will help to create a positive motivational atmosphere at school. Hermitt (2007) emphasizes if a student is curious about something, he will be exhibit greater motivation toward the learning process. Motivation is essential for any successful classroom and wields a positive influence (McKeachie, 1999). There is no magic formula to follow that creates student motivation. However, there are many things an educator can do to establish a learning environment that enhances motivation for students. Whatever approach is used in the classroom, motivation needs to come from the heart (Hermitt, 2007).

Research supports evidence that teachers play a significant role with student motivation and success in the general learning environment. Cohen (2001) states that the most significant needs for children are the actions that teachers take to increase motivation. Hermitt (2007) reminds us teachers need to remain current regarding content material given to students so that it is inviting to students. It is important for students to understand the relevancy of the task so they become interested (Hermitt, 2007). After students have accomplished the task at hand, allowing them to demonstrate what they have learned in a variety of ways can have a positive effect on student motivation in the classroom (Hermitt, 2007). Ash (2007) also suggests that motivation is a key element in teaching that is largely dependent on the teacher. She asserts that teachers play a considerable role in creating positive student motivation. Like Hermitt (2007), Ash (2007) does not deny knowing the relevance of the subject matter will help create student interest through both intrinsic and extrinsic task-related incentives created by the classroom teacher. Ash (2007) claims encouraging positive motivation is an essential teaching strategy and a critical factor that can enhance student achievement in the classroom. The challenge for teachers is to develop student motivation and create learning environments that foster high levels of academic achievement (Ash, 2007; Bempechat & Wells, 1989; Langley, Wambach, Brothen, & Madyun, 2004; Phelps, 2003).

Gottfried (1990) found that high student motivation and increased engagement in learning have decreased the dropout rate in our public schools while improving the levels of student success. Cultivating student's intrinsic motivation is an essential

strategy for teachers because it is significantly relative to a student's future motivation in life and for a student's effective school functioning (Fincham & Cain, 1986; Gottfried, 1990).

Intrinsic motivation becomes an integral strategy for teachers when considering education. Cohen (2001) suggests that teachers begin to focus on intrinsic motivation for students; that is, motivated activities are done for no apparent external reward in the classroom. Cohen (2001) found that helping students become all that they are capable of entails helping them identify, use, and build on prior knowledge. Cohen (2001) asserts the concept of motivation is integral to this process and to meet most academic activities in school. For teachers, academic activities encompass more than instructional objectives. Cohen (2001) further states that teachers also have the responsibility to facilitate maturity in the social and emotional domains. Behaviorist approaches to motivation and discipline provide important tools to accomplish these tasks when used properly. Ideas coming from intrinsic approaches to motivation provide other implications and an alternative perspective that teachers can utilize and incorporate into the special education setting (Cohen, 2001).

McKeachie (1999) found that a person's performance from doing things well (intrinsic motivation) develops a sense of worth and well being. In other words, incompetence is not possible when individuals feel well-being. Moreover, students who fear failure may avoid academically challenging situations (McKeachie, 1999). If a person does not think they can be successful at a task, their motivation decreases significantly. The real task for educators is to find a way to present content curriculum

and stimulate students to want to learn the material (McKeachie, 1999). Methods used to develop student interest and increase motivation includes allowing teachers and students variety in the classroom (McKeachie, 1999).

Bong (2008) examined students' beliefs regarding motivation in public schools. She noted that many students are successful in school while others continue to have difficulty. There has been research to support the claim that an individual's personal motivation often explains the differences between success and failure in academics and behavior for the individual. Bong (2008) states that teachers' behaviors and parental support can enhance a student's confidence at school. Bong (2008) asserts a teacher's high expectations in class can cause students to become motivated and thus feel confident and find learning more interesting at school. Suarez (2007) found that students who believe that assignments were designed with their readiness level in mind will expect themselves to be successful and in turn this fuels a positive self-fulfilling learning environment. If a student does not feel he can be successful or feels they are below average, motivation diminishes and they will usually perform below average.

Research has shown that teachers have a tremendous impact on student motivation and learning as students advance in grades (Spinath & Spinath, 2005). Phelps (2003) found that when teachers make real world connections to students with a lesson, they are more apt to be active participants and become successful learners. Students begin to actively listen to their teachers and their curiosity to learn increases. Often, the teacher who has great impact on her students creates a classroom where enthusiasm and motivation are contagious. Deciphering the power that these influential educators have is

crucial to unraveling the mystery of motivation. Phelps (2003) reminds us enthusiastic educators create motivating classroom environments, and this can have a positive effect on students. Additionally, Phelps (2003) claims measurable, high, and realistic expectations from the teacher will increase student motivation. Motivating teachers might challenge students, but generally speaking, the students will respond positively. Students, generally speaking, respond positively to challenge. Seeking ways to raise students' curiosity and motivation is a worthwhile pursuit for teachers. Teachers should become the best model of motivation for their students (Phelps, 2003).

Cassidy and Lynn (1991) studied the effects of family background on motivation and academic achievement and found that students who exhibit high motivation and academic successes come from a positive home environment. Phelps (2003) confirms the focal point of student academic gains lies within implementing a variety of motivational components and creating meaningful programs at home and in school. Students who acquire intrinsic motivation, perform better overall in school than those students who are not motivated (Cassidy & Lynn, 1991).

Mitchell (1992) examined student's motivation and found that motivation for learning is generally considered a critical area of need in many classrooms. The level of personal motivation a student acquires is indicative of that individual's drive to be successful in addition to the quality of the learning that has occurred (Mitchell, 1992). Furthermore, it is imperative to incorporate intrinsic motivation into the elementary school years because it can have profound implications for a student's personal drive and success in secondary education classrooms (Gottfried, 1990).

Gottfried (1990) believes that motivated students are more successful on academic tasks than students who lack motivation. She found definite correlations between early intrinsic motivation and later academic achievement. School performance can improve when students develop a positive motivation towards learning. Self-advocacy and self-determination in students can contribute towards development of a positive outlook toward education, which results in higher school grades and better overall school performance (Fortier, Vallerand, & Guay, 1995; Gottfried, 1990).

Halawah (2006) believes that enthusiastic, caring teachers impact a student's motivation to learn. When teachers create interesting lessons and allow students to participate in a variety of ways, motivation in the classroom increases (Cothran & Ennis, 2000; Halawah, 2006).

Langley et al. (2004) states that cognitive ability alone does not explain why some students are successful and others are not. Langley et al. (2004) suggests motivation can play a positive role in students' learning. Students can score below average on assignments if they do not feel motivated. Therefore, implementing meaningful and motivational instructional interventions is essential for academic achievement success in the classroom (Langley et al., 2004).

Walker and Kelly (2008) insists motivation is the single most important educational strategy to use in the classroom in order to improve student learning. Educators often discuss the importance of motivating students and meeting their students' needs. Teachers frequently elaborate how students can recite numerous songs in spite of those same students requiring strategies and interventions for simple task

directions. Everything a teacher does with his or her students can be a positive or negative motivational influence (Walker & Kelly, 2008).

Manzano (1999) declares if students are supported and empowered as autonomous learners solely in their academic studies, but their input elsewhere is not valued, a mixed message is being sent at the institutional level that will undermine the most enlightened teacher's attempt to motivate. Recognizing a student's need to be part of their institutional community should start in their academic department. Manzano (1999) confirms in mass public systems, where large amorphous groups are taught by over-stretched staff in resource-poor environments, ways in which to encourage all students to give their best to their studies are eagerly sought by those whose business it is to teach them.

Accommodations and Modifications

We know that the trend in public schools today indicates more students in special education programs are being educated in inclusion classrooms. With this in mind, it has become a challenge for teachers to meet the demands of IDEA as well as the individual needs of all students in their classrooms. Educators are expected to assure mastery of content taught while remaining in compliance with federal and state laws for special education students. Research indicates children in special education programs who are being educated in the general education setting can be successful when appropriate accommodations and modifications are implemented in the classroom by the teacher. Soukup, Wehmeyer, Bashinski, and Bovaird (2007) endorse classroom accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities being educated in the general curriculum

setting. They cited the initial special education law, IDEA, as well as and the Improvement Act, and emphasized the need to educators to identify specific accommodations and curriculum modifications for students to help them be successful in the regular program classroom. To assist educators, all students in special education are required to have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) that recommends appropriate accommodations and modifications in specific subject settings. Soukup et al. (2007) contend knowing every student's individual needs is crucial for teachers in planning lessons especially since more students in special education are participating in inclusive classrooms. Lee et al. (2006) agree the curriculum modifications that are mandated in IDEA for students in special education can positively affect a child's education. Lee et al. (2006) remind us implementing accommodations for students and appropriate curriculum modifications consistently in the classroom will result in greater "students understanding of ideas" and higher success rates for students in the class. Cobb-Morocco (2001) contends that students overall understanding will improve when educators implement subject specific curriculum modifications and accommodations.

Williams (2001) claims implementing appropriate student accommodations and modifications for students in special educations programs are essential for academic success. Williams (2001) reaffirms that minor classroom adjustment, such as moving a student to the front of the room, changing the way the lesson is presented, or allowing students to respond in a variety of ways can make a difference in learning. In addition, Williams (2001) states that students in special education programs benefit from specific individualized accommodations/modifications when they are based upon their individual

learning styles, strengths, and weaknesses. Implementing specific accommodations/ modifications in the general classrooms will help ensure our students receive the necessary supports and services to allow them to be successful in the mainstream setting. Williams (2001) insists when students are in inclusive classrooms, they gain confidence when teachers adapt and allow them to demonstrate what they have learned in non-traditional ways. As they master modified classroom assignments, learning increases and overall student outcomes improve (Williams, 2001).

Hogan (2005) finds that students, especially in the secondary setting, have numerous teachers and different student support personnel when in the inclusive setting and, therefore, require very specific educational aids, supplements, and supports to help them be successful. Before recommending accommodations and modifications for a student, Hogan (2005) contends all educators should consider the individual learning characteristics of the student. Educators should also consider individual student needs and the demands of the instructional setting. Friend and Cook (2000) argue that teachers should look at all facets of academics and the classroom when planning and creating instructional modifications and accommodations for students with exceptionalities. Friend and Cook (2000) contend the main emphasis when creating lessons should be placed on what to teach and how you will present the lesson so that the individual is engaged in the lesson to the maximum extent possible. Wong (2001) extols from her experience that teachers must know their students' individual strengths and learning patterns to appropriately choose the accommodations and modifications that will maximize their learning and participation. Wong (2001) notes that teachers must know

what their individual students have difficulty doing and what they dislike to do when considering the accommodations, adaptations and modifications. Wong (2001) reaffirms that simple changes to an assignment, such as changing the number of choices from four to two, can make a remarkable difference in the students overall success.

Darrow (2007) supports recommending individual student accommodations and modifications in specific content areas. She asserts that adaptations in a student's program can make the difference in that individual being successful or unsuccessful. Darrow (2007) adds, for example, music teachers can make a simple adjustment such as having the student play the strong beat instead of a more difficult note pattern that other students play. Darrow (2007) states when teachers create lessons for students in special programs they should keep in mind how the student learns best as well as consider a student's academic strengths and weaknesses. When teachers use this approach to write lessons for their students, Darrow (2007) praises it allows for at minimum partial classroom participation for students with disabilities. When teachers implement appropriate accommodations and modifications in the classroom for students with disabilities, they will be able to better evaluate students on their skill achievements in class. Darrow (2007) asserts the most important goal for teachers when creating a lesson is to incorporate appropriate accommodations and modifications so that every student can participate in the educational experience.

According to Bomze (2003), teachers must have high expectations for every individual in the class. Bomze (2003) contends all students are challenged by the teacher and when there are high expectations from the teacher, individuals tend to participate

more, perform better, and overall are more successful. Regardless of a student's disability or cognitive level, educators must find ways to challenge their students while building on their strengths. No matter what the limitations may be, it is imperative for educators to identify individual student strengths and capitalize on them. Bomze (2003) argues it is more beneficial for a student in special education to complete a modified portion of a large assignment instead of assigning the entire complex lesson with little or no educational value to the student.

Gable, Hendrickson, Tonelson, and Van Acker (2000) do not deny the educational challenge of creating and implementing accommodations and modifications for adolescents with learning disabilities exists in school technology programs too. Gable et al. (2000) agree that the success of any adaptation is the match between an individual's learning profile and the accommodation. In addition, Gable et al. (2000) emphasize educators must implement advancements being made in the area of accommodations and modifications in technology rooms for individuals with learning disabilities in order to meet the demands of education as well as transitioning to the postsecondary world of work.

Polloway, Epstein, and Bursuck (2003) indicate teachers have more difficulty implementing modifications rather than accommodations for students in the regular education program. Hence, for many public school teachers, but not all, the issue is considering universal classroom adaptations that would be appropriate and beneficial for all students, rather than students solely in special education programs. For example, Polloway, Epstein, and Bursuck (2003) recommend a teacher could create a lesson in

very large, bold print for all students to read. This modification would be accepted by all students in class, even those students in special education programs participating in the inclusive classroom. Polloway, Epstein, and Bursuck (2003) contend teachers may be reluctant to make such accommodations for students in special education inclusive programs, largely because they do not know students' individual learning characteristics and because many of their disabilities are invisible.

To assist public school teachers, Swanson and Deschler (2003) support providing educators with specific training on how to incorporate instructional accommodations and curriculum modifications with content enhancement routines as well as class participation for students with disabilities. Swanson and Deschler (2003) assert when teachers adapt the lesson for students with special needs, for example, focusing on the "critical elements" of a passage, this can have a positive effect on improving outcomes for individuals with disabilities in the classroom. Wehmeyer (2003) acknowledges when teachers stop trying to change individuals and concentrate on matching curriculum modifications to the individual's current academic functioning level and limitations, this enables student learning to take place and success rates improve.

Hequet (2006) reports there are numerous professional development seminars available every school year to train public school teachers and administrators on ways to modify content and implement classroom accommodations to improve the performance of underachieving students. Hequet (2006) complains higher accountability for classroom teachers and standards-based curriculum result in additional stress for teachers over modifying content curriculum. Even though a student's recommended

accommodations and modifications can be found in the Individual Education Plan (IEP), teachers must have the skills to implement them. Hequet (2006) argues an individual's recommended IEP adaptations are intended to "level the playing field" so that students in special education can demonstrate their knowledge and achievement without penalty of their disability. Whether administrator or classroom teacher, educational professionals have a legal obligation to implement the adaptations recommended in a student's IEP. Hequet (2006) calls for educators to build on prior student successes by drawing on their strengths and incorporating appropriate accommodations into lesson planning. When public school teachers and administrators implement accommodations and modifications in school planning, Hequet (2006) asserts students can transition better in school with appropriate interventions and strategies that will enable them to better learn how they learn. Hequet (2006) urges accommodations and modifications can be appropriate and effective for all students.

According to Butzin, Carroll, and Lutz (2006), schools should consider an instructional model where students keep the same teacher for three years in a row in elementary school. Teachers will already know their students' individual strengths and learning patterns when the school year begins. As a result, educators can immediately implement individual accommodations and modifications that will maximize their learning. Butzin, Carroll, and Lutz (2006) warn teachers require time with their students to implement appropriate accommodations and modifications to improve academic achievement.

Wong (2001) stated every student can probably benefit from accommodations at some point in their educational career. Positive, effective instructional strategies and interventions are needed for some students in order to give them an equal point to start (Wong, 2001) in the inclusive classroom with general education students. Deciding how to accommodate and what part of the curriculum to teach students depends largely on the specific assignment and functioning level of the student. Wong (2001) demands when public school administrators and teachers consistently implement instructional accommodations and curriculum modifications for students with special needs, individuals with disabilities can then have true access to the curriculum.

Shaywitz and Shaywitz (1997) warn classroom accommodations and modifications do not automatically guarantee student success. Shaywitz and Shaywitz (1997) claim accommodations and modifications implemented in the classroom should be used as a catalyst for learning that will allow an individual the opportunity to demonstrate effort and ability. In their study, Shaywitz and Shaywitz (1997) contend without the implementation of classroom adaptations for students in the inclusive setting, the probability of academic success is diminished greatly.

Academic Improvements

Educators in today's classrooms are being are being asked to teach an increasing diverse population in our public schools. Classrooms are comprised of students from a variety of cultural backgrounds and academic levels. Tomlinson (2004) notes students come from a variety of backgrounds and some even have a different language background. Heacox (2002) believes when it comes to describing lesson planning, one

size does not fit all. Like Tomlinson, Heacox (2002) states students that make up classrooms come from different backgrounds and various strengths. Brighton (2002) acknowledges modern classrooms should be based on the concept that learners are all essentially different. Heacox (2002) claims when teachers and administrators work with students' individual characteristics and build on their strengths, students often experience success and maximize their potential as individuals. Heacox (2002) asserts implementing academic improvements helps teachers to adjust learning based on the individual's academic level, learning style, personal experiences, preferences, and needs resulting in positive outcomes.

Benjamin (2003) noted that differentiated instruction (academic improvements) is a practice that grows out of specific beliefs. The way teachers treat students, create lessons, and manage the classroom is indicative of what the teacher believes is important. Teachers need ample planning time, organizational skills, and good rapport with students to successfully implement academic improvements (Benjamin, 2003). Benjamin (2003) adds the best classes are those where the teacher establishes expectations and has variety in structure. Benjamin (2003) contends that differentiating instruction for students does not interfere with a teacher's style. Benjamin (2003) argues any connectedness between teacher and student has a positive learning effect on the individual and his connection to the community and school as a whole. For example, Benjamin (2003) claims humor, intuition, warmth, and a genuine concern for students are integral components of academic improvements. The role of the educator is vital and

becomes one of meaningful instruction and mediator of classroom activities when implementing academic improvements (Blanton, 1998).

Tomlinson (2000, 2001, 2003) insists when teachers implement differentiated instruction, it can prove to be a positive strategy to address learner differences. Hall (2002) agrees with Tomlinson and states differentiating instruction recognized diverse student cultures, academic readiness levels, and individual learning characteristics of all students. Mulroy and Eddinger (2003) make the point that educators in a differentiated learning environment can provide an effective and beneficial learning experience for all students. Tomlinson (2003) contends that differentiating instruction can balance individual needs and create opportunities for all students to be successful. In addition, Tomlinson (2003) believes that differentiation gives all students an equal opportunity to perform at their highest level. McAdamis (2001) adds that academic improvements in the classroom allow educators to concentrate on the same key concepts for everyone, while incorporating individual learning styles toward understanding those main ideas. Tuttle (2000) concurs with McAdamis and emphasizes differentiating provides opportunities for individuals to grasp concepts as rapidly and as meaningful as possible. Basically, these researchers are saying if teachers incorporate the philosophy of differentiated instruction in the classroom, they choose to respond to student specific needs of individuals with disabilities and that can result in positive outcomes.

Brimijoin, Marquissee, and Tomlinson (2003) remind us that differentiating classrooms create learning environments that resemble a “community” and that type of classroom atmosphere gives everyone a chance to demonstrate mastery regardless of

their current academic functioning performance. Tomlinson (2000, 2001) emphasizes when teachers incorporate differentiating into planning for their classroom "community," they must take into account every child's individual readiness, personal interests, and student learning characteristics so that every student has the maximum opportunity to be successful.

Tomlinson (2000) refers to student readiness being an integral part of differentiating in the classroom. Student readiness refers to the "point of entry" for each individual in the class (Tomlinson, 2000). Tomlinson (2000) explains that some children enter the learning environment performing on grade level, while others in the class may be functioning below or even above grade level. This can be a common characteristic that teachers face in an inclusive classroom. Lawrence-Brown (2004) adds since students have readiness levels across a wide range in classrooms, differentiating instruction helps to create a learning atmosphere where every individual can be successful. In his study, Lawrence-Brown (2004) contends teachers must develop differentiating lessons by choosing material and supports that will specifically enhance each individual learner's readiness level. Tomlinson (2001, 2003) adds educators should be familiar with their students and each individual's readiness level. She further claims that teachers must develop tasks for students who are at an appropriate level. Tasks should be challenging, but not too difficult. Accordingly, McAdamis (2001) agrees that before teachers implement academic improvements in the classroom, they must discern what the student already knows prior to a new task being introduced. Blanton (1998) confirms that an

individual's skills can only be enhanced and enriched when the teacher creates purposeful classroom activities.

Like Tomlinson (2000, 2001), McAdamis (2001) contends when teachers incorporate students' interests in planning lessons, they become engaged and feel involved with the daily operations of the classroom. Tomlinson (2000, 2001) adds that personal interests vary among students, but incorporating student interests when planning lessons can be an effective means to enhance and support learning. McBride (2004) and Tomlinson (2000, 2001) contend students find the content to be more meaningful when the teacher builds lessons around their personal interests, concerns, and prior experiences. Lawrence-Brown (2004) adds even students functioning below grade level can experience marginalized success when teachers incorporate student interests into lesson planning. All students, contends Lawrence-Brown (2004) even those who are struggling, have interests and passions that the teacher can use to provide a variety of opportunities within the room for every individual to be engaged and successful.

Differentiating instruction means supporting a variety of learning styles among individuals in the classroom (Lawrence-Brown, 2004; Tomlinson, 2001). Lawrence-Brown (2004) believes classroom activities can be developed by the teacher that enhance group learning and/or provide opportunities for individual learning. Guild (2001) reminds us that not all students learn the same way so teachers need to be aware of how the individual students in their classrooms learn best. Differentiating instruction allows the teacher to develop and prioritize lessons and activities for students so they enrich

their learning experience (Lawrence-Brown, 2004). Fine (2003) claims students participating in special education programs showed gains in test scores after they were instructed by teachers who took their individual learning styles into account rather than a traditional direct instruction to all students. Furthermore, Fine (2003) reports these students' classroom performance was significantly better and their overall attitudes toward learning improved.

There is additional research that shows positive outcomes when teachers incorporate differentiated instruction in the classroom. In a study involving student teachers who implemented academic improvements in the classroom, Johnsen (2003) contends that differentiating instruction was engaging for the students, heightened learner interest, and was a positive experience for the student educator as well. Students had positive gains in the classroom when differentiating instruction was the method of teaching. Johnsen (2003) clarifies that students with special needs continued to receive other supplementary aids and services in collaboration with different instructional strategies and techniques. From this research, Johnsen (2003) confirms that student teachers experience positive outcomes when implementing academic improvements; however, she does question whether students with special needs can be successful on assignments solely by differentiating instruction. Johnsen (2003) warns individual supplementary aids and services may still be needed for the student with exceptionalities to demonstrate success in the classroom.

In a study at one middle school, Tomlinson (1995) shows that teachers' attitudes toward a change have a lot to do with whether or not the teacher is likely to embrace the

concept of differentiated instruction in the classroom. Tomlinson (1995) notes that teachers, who had positive outcomes early in the process, were more inclined to embrace and implement the concept of differentiated instruction than those who did not experience early success. Additionally, Tomlinson (1995) contends the teachers' ages were not a factor in determining acceptance of the differentiated instruction concept. At first, Tomlinson (1995) claims teachers showed opposition to implementing the differentiated instruction model to meet the diverse needs of students. Tomlinson (1995) states there was dissention among the teachers about being directed to incorporate differentiated instructional strategies in their classrooms, and this negatively affected the teacher's sense of self-efficacy. Tomlinson (1995) reports, too, that educators experienced concerns toward implementing differentiated instruction including concerns over lesson planning, classroom management and preparation for assessments as well as insecurity over a change in their role as a teacher. Robison (2004) adds that teachers have concerns with planning time if they are going to be required to implement differentiated instruction into their classroom.

A study by Tomlinson, Moon, and Callahan (1998) contends that only a minimal number of educators consider individual learning styles, personal interests, and/or ethnic diversity when developing academic tasks. Tomlinson, Moon, and Callahan (1998) states only a minimal number of teachers choose to differentiate instruction to respond to learner variance. This case study shows many teachers were skeptical about incorporating varied instructional strategies and "expressed frustration" when trying to develop differentiated lessons. According to Tomlinson, Moon, and Callahan (1998),

most teachers felt unsure and ill prepared to deal with learner diversity and, therefore, choose the “one size fits all” lesson plan for the class. Robison (2004) also claims teachers are uneasy about the increased planning time that is required when creating differentiated lessons to appropriately address learner diversity. Dunn, Griggs, Olson, Gorman, and Beasley (1995) contends that educators who are incorporating differentiated instruction into their classrooms require school districts to provide continuing professional development in that area to ensure lessons are developed and implemented appropriately so that individual needs are met for students. Similar to Dunn et al. (1995), Affholder (2003) asserts teachers are more likely to embrace the philosophy of differentiating instruction when they have had prior comprehensive training with these teaching methods.

Social Issues

According to Shriver and Weissberg (2005), students learn through both social and academic interaction. They make claim that social interaction and the academic learning processes are complementary. Shechtman (2002) reiterates in order to increase learner development, the social and emotional dimensions along with the academic need to be addressed in the classroom by the individual’s teacher. Shriver and Weissberg (2005) contend social interactions at school can play an integral part in improving academic performance in the classroom. Vygotsky (1986) emphasizes a child cannot fully develop unless individual learner characteristics as well as the social world that individual has grown up in is examined and considered by the teacher when planning and instructing that student. Vygotsky (1986) insists through social and cognitive

interaction with students, teachers can engage them in ways they are “nurtured” and then “scaffold” them in the learning process. Kublin, Wetherby, Crais, and Prizant (1989) adds that Vygotsky defines a child’s learning process as being embedded in social events. He contends the learning process evolves as the individual interacts with others in their environment. Tharp and Gallimore (1988) note Vygotsky’s theory has meaningful implications for schools, administrators, teachers, and students. Tharp and Gallimore (1988) remind us a central theme of Vygotsky’s sociocultural perspective is that humans develop higher order thinking skills through social interaction with people in their environment.

Obviously, Vygotsky’s (1986) believes social interaction is an important concept to consider in school programming. Teachers must be aware of the classroom learning environment and the important role it plays in creating social interaction opportunities for students. Vygotsky (1986) reminds us social interaction with students can have a positive impact on learner development. Shriver and Weissberg (2005) claim when students participate in programs designed to develop social skills, they consistently become good, respectable citizens in their community. Another research study examining the effects of social issues of students in schools was conducted by Durlak and Weissberg (2007). In this study, several teachers and students participated in a social learning program at school. Following the social interaction interventions, Durlak and Weissberg (2007) indicate students made positive gains in several areas. Students participating in the social programs show an increase in overall standardized achievement test scores. Students in the social learning program enhance their skills that

often results in better classroom behavior unlike those individuals who were not included in the social learning program. Durlak and Weissberg (2007) advocate that the classroom teacher can create a learning environment and well-designed lessons that promote student growth in social development as well as improved academic performance. Although there are many social learning programs available outside of the school, Durlak and Weissberg (2007) contend the classroom teacher can be the sole creator and implementer of social interaction opportunities for students.

Like Durlak and Weissberg, Jennings and DiPrete (2010) reaffirm that every educators' actions affect student social growth and the overall development of individuals. Jennings and DiPrete (2010) agree with Shriver and Weissberg and emphasize the need for social interaction in the classroom and state that a child's experience at school entails more than just academics. The study shows that classrooms where students score above average and have a good rapport with their teacher are the same classrooms where social interaction opportunities are provided to them by their teacher. Jennings and DiPrete (2010) believe that academic achievement can be positively affected when the teacher incorporates a social skills curriculum in the classroom. As a result, Jennings and DiPrete (2010) contend students receive an indirect boost to academics when their teachers incorporate social skills in the classroom. Van Petegem, Aelterman, Van Keer, Hilde, and Rosseel (2008) agree that interpersonal relationships at school between teachers and their students can contribute to academic improvements. Van Petegem et al. (2008) insist that students show an increase in academic development and gains in almost every area when they have a positive social

relationship with their teachers. Van Petegem et al. (2008) add students perform better when their teachers are less authoritarian; however, the teacher's classroom management and learning environment is still an integral component of a child's complete education. Van Petegem et al. (2008) assert that a student's social wellbeing can be an excellent indicator of an individual's quality education.

Caparos, Cetera, Ogden, and Rossett (2002) studied a social skills interaction program that was designed to increase appropriate classroom behavior as well as improve academic achievement in one school. In this study, Caparos et al. (2002), claim that when a student lacks social interaction skills, it can contribute to off-task behaviors by that individual in the classroom that can disrupt the learning environment. After implementing a social interaction skills program for three months at one school, the results showed students had an improved sense of belonging, better social intervention with others, as well as growth in academics. The research findings obtained from Caparos et al. (2002) show a decrease in student off-task behaviors and an improvement in cooperative working relationships for students in diverse classrooms following the social program intervention.

Similar to Caparos et al., Miller, Lane, and Wehby (2005) claim when a teacher provides consistent social interaction skills instruction to students, including students with disabilities, the program results in a decrease in inappropriate classroom off-task behavior among students. In addition, after the social interaction interventions, Miller, Lane, and Wehby (2005) make note that it is encouraging to see students show an increase in academic engaged time as well.

Another research study examining the effects of social interaction programs was conducted by Rutherford, Dupaul, and Jitendra (2008). General education students participated in the study. In addition, students who were experiencing difficulty in the core subject areas of math and reading were chosen to participate in the study as well. Participants were exposed to numerous opportunities for social interaction and academic development monitored by their teachers. Rutherford, Dupaul, and Jitendra (2008) analyzed results between changes in academic improvements and social relations from prior to the social intervention to approximately one school year later. Rutherford, Dupaul, and Jitendra (2008) assert students participating in the teacher implemented social interaction program increased their reading and math scores overall. Additionally, results from Rutherford, Dupaul, and Jitendra (2008) indicate corresponding improvements in social skills and self-control for those individuals receiving the social interaction interventions.

Lane, Wehby, and Cooley (2006) believe many educators in public schools share the same thoughts as Rutherford, Dupaul, and Jitendra (2008), regarding the significance of social interaction. Lane, Wehby, and Cooley (2006) claim high school teachers view social skills as an integral part of education. High school educators place more emphasis on social skills than elementary and middle school educators. Hair, Jager, and Garrett (2002) contend as individuals mature, their social interaction skills are used to develop and friendships. Like Lane, Wehby, and Cooley (2006), Hair, Jager, and Garrett (2002) concur that students in secondary schools benefit from social interactions with others and healthy relationships in their surroundings. These relationships help to develop an

individual's social skills. Furthermore, Hair, Jager, and Garrett (2002) claim healthy social relationships and quality social interactions with others play a significant part for academic success as well as relationships later on in life. Moreover, Lane, Wehby, and Cooley (2006) believe public school teachers at low-performing schools also view social skills and appropriate social interaction as crucial for academic improvements. Regardless of the level of education or type of campus, this prior research basically indicates social interaction in the classroom helps to promote overall academic improvements and learner development with students, including students with exceptionalities.

Ethnic Student Groups in Special Education

Johnson and Kritsonis (2006) confirm many African American students face disparities in achievement and academic instruction in our public schools because educators do not have student supports in place. Without supports for our students, it is difficult for them to be successful in school. Reschly, Kicklighter, and McKee (1988) remind us that African American students, especially, tend to fall in the lowest range in many areas of academic achievement and overall success in school. On the average, African American students receive the lowest intelligence test ratings and achievement test scores among student groups (Humphreys, 1988). Moreover, this same ethnic group is historically poorly represented in classes for the gifted and talented (Baldwin, 1987). Accordingly, African Americans are more likely to meet eligibility requirements for special education programs in our schools than any other ethnic group (Reschly,

Kicklighter, & McKee, 1988). Richardson (1994) specifically adds African American children are twice as likely to be placed in special education programs as Anglo children.

Fossey (1996) confirms the percentage of students participating in special education that are African American has risen through the past years. Fossey (1996) claims in the mid-seventies, less than two out of every three special education students were African Americans in special education. Fossey (1996) states the number students placed in special education that are African American increased to more than three out of every four students in the mid-nineties, which resulted in overrepresentation of an ethnic student group in special education. Pack (1996) supports the fact that African American students are the highest represented ethnic group in every age level participating in special education programs. From elementary school to high school, African American students average 75-80% of special education enrollments in our public schools. The misrepresentation of African Americans in special education programs continues to be a grave issue in our schools today. Heller, Holtzman, and Messick (1982) warned that overrepresentation in special education programs of one specific culture can become a stigma for that ethnic group. Through the years, the classroom instruction that has been provided to culturally diverse students has been documented as inequitable (Gay 1989; Obiakor, 1992). When African American students are compared to their dominant culture peers, they receive remedial instruction that results in that ethnic group being retained more than any other culturally diverse group (Meisels & Liaw, 1993; Oakes, 1994). According to Heller, Calcaterra, Burson, and Tyler (1996), African American students in special education programs have

historically received an incomplete education in part because the instruction that has been provided to the students was of poor quality and ineffective.

The dropout percentage of African American students is at a higher rate than their peers in our public schools, which has an impact on that ethnic group's number of suspensions and expulsions (Ewing, 1995; McFadden, Marsh, Price, & Hwang, 1992; Rumberger, 1994). Many African American students continue to show minimal gains in academic achievement even after teaching interventions were offered. Schools today are still being faced with the concern over inequalities for students while being accountable for the academic success for all students. Specific student supports must be identified and embedded in today's school initiatives for ethnic group students to remedy these inequalities for culturally diverse children, especially when they are participating in special education inclusive classrooms with their peers.

As the literature suggests, for years, systemic deficiencies have existed in our schools that directly and indirectly affect ethnic groups. Hampton (1996) states school systems have divided students into ability categories based on academic achievement. Traditionally, ability grouping and tracking has meant denying African American students equal educational opportunities. This grouping of students over the years, notes Hampton (1996), sends messages to African American students that they are not good enough to receive quality education. Hampton (1996) asserts that ability grouping is developed so that Anglo students specifically, gain power, knowledge, and have opportunities to be successful in school. Hampton (1996) claims these educational messages were derived from the stereotype cultural stigma for African Americans in

special education, and that is a reflection of the racial inequalities existing within our educational system. African American students participating in special education programs are often labeled and many times subject to ineffective instruction and little interest from the administrators and teachers (Hampton, 1996).

Like Heller et al. (1982), Sharpe (1996) adds the increasing numbers of African American students in our special populations will continue to be an area requiring grave attention when planning for the future of our schools. School districts must be prepared to train their personnel so they are equipped with the most current research indicating successful supports for students. Considering the diverse population of students that teachers have in inclusive classrooms, Sharpe (1996) contends teachers will rely more heavily on student supports to meet the demands of academic accountability in their classrooms. If the education trend continues, this could result in even more African American students referred for special education in the years to come resulting in an increased need for specific student supports in our schools.

Sharpe (1996) notes many of the issues regarding the overrepresentation of African American students in special education can be attributed to a lack of preparation by educators to recognize the impact culture has on learning styles. Sharpe (1996) suggests educators be trained to implement specific, meaningful student supports in classrooms currently experienced by many African American students so they have an equal opportunity for academic success as their peers. Even after years of knowing the problem exists with the disproportionate number of African Americans placed in special

education, specific student cultural supports have not been identified to help these students achieve academic success and the problem continues to exist.

Patton (1998) claims the perpetuation of African Americans in special education programs serves as counterforce against an ethic of caring on behalf of teachers. Many African American students continue to be harmed by unjust cultural presuppositions by their teachers. Teachers must be made aware of cultural differences among their students. Knowing what specific student supports are beneficial to a culturally diverse ethnic group will assist school districts in training their teachers and being prepared to offer equal opportunities for all students to be successful. We must reanalyze our student supports being implemented in the classroom by the teacher for our culturally diverse students.

Not only are African American student populations increasing in our classrooms, Hispanic students, too, have become an integral part of our schools. According to Utley and Obiakor (1995), trends show that Hispanic Americans ethnic group will increase in number to 19 million in 2020. Numerically, this rate is the fastest growing ethnic group, not only in Texas but across the United States (Gollnick & Chinn, 1990).

According to Gollnick and Chinn (1990), the growing numbers of students from diverse ethnic cultures will continue to be in danger for placement in special education programs. Are our teachers and administrators prepared for the continued influx of minorities in our general education inclusive classrooms?

For the first time in history, Archer (1996) believes that the number of Anglo students in the United States will dip below 50% between 2030 and 2040. One out of

every four students will be of Hispanic origin by 2030. The dropout rate of Hispanic students in 1993 was 35% nationwide (Archer, 1996). Bennett (1999) predicted that within the next 20 years, the number of ethnic students at risk of school failure and dropout will continue to grow, particularly in schools with higher numbers of culturally diverse students enrolled. If the trend continues, the number of Hispanic students will increase in special education programs as well.

Sharpe (1996) completed a study involving a focus group examining teachers' attitudes toward culturally diverse students that are serviced in inclusive classrooms. Based on the data received by Sharpe (1996), Hispanic students, like their African American peers, continue to be harmed by unjust cultural presuppositions by their teachers. If all students are to have an equal opportunity in achieving academic success, it is absolutely essential for our educators to be versed, trained, and knowledgeable of diverse student ethnic students' backgrounds and learning styles especially when they are placed in our inclusive classrooms. Training teachers and administrators on specific student supports that are beneficial to a culturally diverse ethnic group will assist school districts and their teachers in being prepared to offer equal opportunities for all students to be successful.

Gollnick and Chinn (1990) believe a large part of this Hispanic population growth is from the least economic stable ethnic group. This ethnic group is the largest and fastest growing diverse group of students in our school population (Sanchez, 2002) Sanchez (2002) adds that Hispanic students continue to lag behind White students on most measures of academic achievement. There is a growing consensus, like African

American students, that teachers are not meeting the needs of Hispanic students. Sanchez (2002) claims that many Hispanic individuals are being squandered because Hispanic students continue to receive an inferior education resulting in low-paying jobs for that ethnic group. Sanchez (2002) believes the number of Hispanics moving to low-paying jobs in communities escalates every year, which can be a reflection on the education they have received. Our public school teachers are not adequately prepared and trained to teach diverse ethnic students in their classrooms. Teachers and administrators need more guidance on working with specific ethnic student groups and on how best to teach them. Sanchez (2002) states the effect on the local economy has been positive, but the impact on the public schools continues to be a grave problem.

D'Alonzo, Giordano, and Cross (1996) noted that general education teachers have helped perpetuate the problem of educating culturally diverse students by maintaining a belief or attitude that not all students are capable of learning within a general education system. Many teachers believe the education of students with disabilities is up to those who are specifically trained to do so. Research has shown that many public school teachers have a negative view of both students with disabilities and the inclusion of such students because they feel under prepared to teach the culturally ethnic diverse special education student in their classroom (D'Alonzo & Ledon, 1992).

Since IDEA mandates the inclusion of students in general education classrooms by law, general education teachers' skills and attitudes have been identified as important variables in the success of integrating all students (D'Alonzo, Giordano, & Cross, 1996). School administrators and general education teachers must change their attitudes and

consistently implement meaningful student supports specific to ethnic groups of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. According to Wilczenski (1991), the success of students in special education inclusive classrooms will depend on their teachers receiving specific cultural diversity pre-services toward inclusion as well as academic preparation in teaching as there are increasing numbers of ethnic students with disabilities in the general education program. So what specific student supports can educators implement to provide our culturally diverse students with a quality education as they are being faced with a growing trend of ethnic groups in our inclusive classrooms today? Educators must rethink the supports implemented in the classroom to reach students from various cultural backgrounds and students with disabilities as well.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to compare how campus professionals perceive the level of motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues of students in special education in selected public schools in Education Service Center, Region 20, Texas. A description of the population of interest to the study, survey instrument, procedures implemented, and the method used for data analysis is provided below.

Population

The research was designed to compare data on how campus staff professionals perceive the level of motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues of students in special education in public schools in Education Service Center, Region 20, Texas A sampling of educators from the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) represented the urban population for Region 20. While San Antonio public schools were established by the City Council in 1854, it was not until May 2, 1899, that the school system became an independent district. The schools were separated from city control with the formation of their own board of trustees. Four years later, in 1903, SAISD received its first charter from the state of Texas.

Today, the SAISD has the third largest student population of the 15 school districts that are entirely or primarily within the county. It is the 13th largest of Texas' 1,057 school districts. The SAISD encompasses 79 square miles in central Bexar County

and has a total population of 313,436 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Most of the district lies within the city limits of San Antonio, but it also serves parts of the cities of Olmos Park and Balcones Heights and some unincorporated areas of the county. Residents of the SAISD live in the hub of what American humorist Will Rogers rightly called one of America's four unique cities. The SAISD is an urban community of thriving neighborhoods, well-established businesses, historic sites, active worship centers, world-class museums, and excellent restaurants and recreational facilities. SAISD is comprised of students from various ethnic backgrounds as noted in Table 1.

Table 1. Ethnic Composition of the SAISD Student Body

Ethnicity	Percentage
Hispanic	87.0
African American	8.8
White (Not Hispanic)	3.3
Asian or Pacific Island	.2
American Indian	.1

SAISD schools consist of the following numbers of students at each organizational level as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of Students at Each Organizational Level in SAISD

School	Number
Elementary	30,604
Middle	11,882
High	14,094
Total Membership	56,580

The makeup of SAISD personnel is noted in Table 3.

Table 3. SAISD Personnel

Personnel	Number
Teachers	3,633
Campus Instructional Coordinators	137
Counselors	155
Librarians	75
Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, Dental Hygienists	70
Attendance Personnel (attendance monitors, social workers)	40
Superintendent's Staff, Directors, and Central Office Administrators	81
Principals, Assistant Principals, and Administrative Assistants	191
Remaining Professionals	242
Teacher & Community Worker Assistants, Health Assistant, & LVN's	1,065
Clerical	583
Cafeteria Employees	629
Maintenance, Custodial, & Transportation	951
Certified Police Officers	81
Total Number of Employees (November 2005)	7,933

Additional personnel information is also described in Table 4.

Table 4. SAISD Employee Facts and Figures

Employee Facts	Number
Teachers with Advanced Degrees	39%
Bilingual Teachers	433.0
Special Education Teachers	433.0
Occupational Education & Technology Teachers	102.0
Teachers' Average Years of Experience	13.5
Teachers' Average Years with SAISD	10.4

To obtain demographic information, the respondents were asked to provide information on their role in the organization (administrator, special education teacher, regular education teacher, or other teacher), gender (male or female), ethnicity (African American, Hispanic, Anglo American, or other ethnic background) and organizational level (elementary, middle, or high school). A Likert scale questionnaire consisting of four domains (motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues) was used to collect the data. Cluster I (motivation) included items 1-6 on the survey questionnaire; Cluster II (accommodations/modifications) included items 7-12; Cluster III (academic improvements) included items 13-16; and Cluster IV (social issues) included items 17-20 of the survey questionnaire.

A Likert scale is a psychometric scale commonly used in questionnaires and is the most widely used scale in survey research. When responding to a Likert questionnaire item, respondents specify their level of agreement to a statement. The scale is named after its inventor, psychologist Rensis Likert. A Likert item is simply a statement which the respondent is asked to evaluate according to any kind of subjective or objective criteria; generally, the level of agreement or disagreement is measured. Likert scaling is a bipolar scaling method, measuring either positive or negative response to a statement. A four-point scale was used in this study; this is a forced choice method since the middle option of "Neither agree nor disagree" was not available. Responses to several Likert questions may be summed, providing that all questions use the same Likert scale and that the scale is a defendable approximation to an interval scale, in which case they may be treated as interval data measuring a latent variable. If the summed responses fulfill these assumptions, parametric statistical tests such as the analysis of variance can be applied (Likert, 1932). Why are these underlined?

Administrators and teachers from selected public elementary schools enrolling grades pre-kindergarten through 12 with students in special education programs served as the study's population. This consisted of approximately 30 administrators and 360 teachers and 7 selected public schools. The administrators who were surveyed included principals and assistant principals serving as certified teacher appraisers in the selected public schools identified in the study. Campus instructional coordinators, counselors, and special education supervisors were included as administrators. Nurses, licensed school psychologists, educational diagnosticians, and social workers were other teachers.

Substitute teachers were not included. Teachers included in this study were teachers with a certification in their field of expertise as well as teachers on an emergency teaching certificate. Selected public schools for this study were located in Education Service Center, Region 20, Texas. The selected public schools for this study populate students from various ethnic backgrounds. The seven campuses selected were located in the San Antonio Independent School District. The socio-economic level of these students attending the selected elementary schools ranged from lower income to middle income levels.

Instrumentation

This researcher sought permission from the developer of the H. Oliver King Assessment Survey to modify the survey for this study. The survey used in this study, **"**Perceptions of Educational Professionals about Special Education Students" is located in Appendix A. Guidelines found in *Educational Research: An Introduction* (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996) were used to develop this special education assessment survey. Responses to the survey were measured on a four-point Likert scale. Content validity for the survey instrument was established by the use of a panel of experts. The panel of experts included a high school assistant principal with a Ph.D. in Education who served special population students throughout his professional career. The second member was an assistant superintendent of an urban school district with many years of experience in administrative positions and worked for Education Service Center, Region 20. The third member of the panel of experts was a Ph.D. candidate and teacher in an urban school in San Antonio, Texas. The fourth member held a Ph.D. with a concentration in program

evaluation. The panel of experts reviewed the rules for constructing questionnaire items for inclusion in the survey instrument. The rules were as follows:

- Clarity is essential; ambiguity must be avoided. If your results are to be valid, an item must mean the same thing to all respondents. For example, terms like “several,” “most,” “usually” have no precise meaning and should be avoided.
- Short items are preferable to long items because short items are easier to understand. Avoid detailed questions that are unnecessarily detailed.
- Negative items should be avoided as they are misread by many respondents; that is, the negative word is overlooked, resulting in the respondent giving an answer that is opposite to the person’s real opinion.
- Avoid “double-barreled” items that require the subject to respond to two separate ideas with a single answer. An item such as “Although labor unions are desirable in most fields, they have no place in the teaching profession” cannot be answered with the usual closed-question format (such as “strongly agree,” “agree,” “ disagree,” “strongly disagree”) by a person who disagrees with one part of the item and agrees with the other part.
- Do not use technical terms, jargon, or “big” words that some respondents may not understand. Remember, clarity is especially important in questionnaires since the respondent is usually reached by mail and has no one available to explain unclear terms.
- When a general and a related specific question are to be asked together, it is preferable to ask the general question first. If the specific question is asked

first, it tends to narrow the focus of the following general question and to change responses to the general question.

- Finally, it is very important that an effort be made to avoid biased or leading questions. If the subject is given hints as to the type of answer you would most prefer, there is some tendency to give you what you want.

This tendency is especially strong when the letter of the transmittal that accompanies the questionnaire has been signed by someone that the subject is eager to please (Borg & Gall, 1989). After careful consideration of all rules and recommendations for questionnaire development, the developer of the instrument conducted an extensive review of existing instruments and related studies on the influence of special education on education support of ethnic students as perceived by administrators and teachers. The H. Oliver King Special Education Assessment Survey was developed in the spring of 2001. Each member of the panel was asked to evaluate the survey instrument items based on a scale and to make both comments and suggestions as warranted. The panel evaluated the comfort level of each section of the survey. The appropriateness of the questions and the likelihood that each would obtain the desired information were also analyzed by the panel. The instrument was revised with the recommendations made by the panel of experts. Reliability estimates were not reported since the items were independent of one another.

The survey instrument was divided into two major sections. In the first section, participants were asked to provide basic demographic data, such as their current grade level taught, gender, ethnicity, and organizational role. In the second section,

participants were asked to respond to information pertaining to motivational strategies, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues toward ethnic students' place in special education in selected public schools in Education Service Center, Region 20, Texas. The modified survey was titled Perceptions of Educational Professionals about Special Education Students.

The data obtained from the survey were categorized and analyzed. The purpose of the research was to collect information regarding the feelings, motivation, attitudes, accomplishments, knowledge, and experiences of individuals by asking the same questions of all respondents in the sample (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996).

Procedures

This researcher requested permission to conduct the questionnaire from selected district superintendents in Education Service Center, Region 20, Texas (Appendix B). The district identified in the study was the San Antonio Independent School District. After permission was granted, each school principal was contacted by letter and telephone. This process helped establish a uniform procedure for delivery of the survey instrument and to secure a point of contact at each school site. Survey packets were delivered to each school by the researcher and placed in the participants' mailboxes or given to the administrator in charge of that campus for distribution to the campus participants. The participants were asked to answer all or as many questions on the survey. Participants were being asked to return the survey in the same envelope.

Each packet included an information sheet (Appendix C) and survey instrument. The administrators were informed prior to distributing the forms that the participants

may return the survey to the office drop box. Participants were also informed the instrument could be completed in approximately 5-20 minutes. Participants were provided with a brief explanation of their role in the study and informed that their responses would be kept confidential and that that the results would be discussed as group data.

In the letter accompanying the survey, administrators and teachers received information concerning the research study, assurance of anonymity, instructions for completing the survey, and instructions for returning the survey. Demographic data were not requested. However, each participant was asked to indicate his or her gender, ethnicity, grade levels taught, and organizational role (administrator, special education teacher, regular education teacher, or other teacher).

Data Analysis

The results of the study were reported using numerical and graphical techniques. Analysis and interpretations of the data followed the appropriate quantitative techniques according to *Educational Research: An Introduction* (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996).

The data collected by the survey instrument were entered into a statistical software program entitled SPSS 16.0. As discussed in detail later, a one-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) procedure was performed to answer the research questions. Demographic data were analyzed as they related to each factor. An alpha level of .001 and .05 was used to establish significance. Data analysis included specific statistical procedures for use in answering each research question. Tables were used to report the

findings in this study. For each subgroup, a table presents the n-counts, means, standard deviations, analysis of variance, and Scheffé *post hoc* results.

The mean or average is probably the most commonly used method of describing central tendency. The mean is obtained by dividing the sum of observed values by the number of observations, *n*. Although data points fall above, below, or on the mean, it can be considered a good estimate for predicting subsequent data points. A higher mean score represents more of the trait (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996).

The standard deviation of a statistical population, a data set, or a probability distribution is the square root of its variance. Standard deviation is a widely used measure of the variability or dispersion, being algebraically more tractable though practically less robust than the expected deviation or average absolute deviation. A low standard deviation indicates that the data points tend to be very close to the mean, whereas high standard deviation indicates that the data are spread out over a large range of values (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996).

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine if differences exist between one of the means in the population, from which these sample means were drawn, was different from at least one of the other means. Analysis and interpretation of the data followed the principles detailed by Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996).

In statistics, analysis of variance (ANOVA) is a collection of statistical models, and their associated procedures, in which the observed variance is partitioned into components due to different explanatory variables. The initial techniques of the analysis of variance were developed by the statistician and geneticist Fisher in the 1920s and

1930s, and is sometimes known as Fisher's ANOVA or Fisher's analysis of variance, due to the use of Fisher's F-distribution as part of the test of statistical significance. Analysis of variance is the procedure used when the researcher wants to investigate situations where there are more than two levels of the independent variable. Stated another way, when there are more than two groups and we would like to compare their performance across a dependent variable, use ANOVA. Using ANOVA, we determine if the groups differ on some continuous variable of interest (Ott, 1993).

Scheffé's procedure is perhaps the most commonly used post hoc procedure, the most flexible, and the most conservative. It is a multiple comparison statistical procedure used to determine where differences between groups exist after a significant F ratio has been obtained in a one-way ANOVA. Scheffé's procedure corrects alpha for all pair-wise or simple comparisons of means, but also for all complex comparisons of means as well. Complex comparisons involve contrasts of more than two means at a time (Stevens & Humphreys, 1999).

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

This chapter presents results pertaining to how campus professional staff as a whole perceive motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues of students in special education in selected public schools in Education Service Center, Region 20. Specifically, results from 55 special education teachers, 168 regular education teachers, 30 other teachers and 30 administrators were analyzed for the results. Moreover, this study presented data on how campus professional staff members perceived motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues of special education students when controlling for three student ethnic groups and four employee organizational roles in selected public schools. The three student ethnic groups consisted of Hispanic, African American, and White students. Organizational roles were defined as administrator, special education teacher, regular education teacher, and others.

The research questions are as follows:

1. How do campus professional staff members as a whole perceive motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues regarding special education students in selected schools in ESC Region 20, Texas?
2. How do campus professional staff members perceive motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues regarding special education students when controlling for three student ethnic

groups (Hispanic, African American, and White) in selected schools in ESC Region 20, Texas?

3. How do campus professional staff members perceive motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues regarding special education students when controlling for the four organizational roles (special education teacher, regular education teacher, other teacher, and administrator) in selected schools in ESC Region 20, Texas?

Results

Research Question 1

First, data on campus professional staff members' perceptions of motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues of students in special education in selected schools in ESC Region 20, Texas, were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Table 5 reports the descriptive findings of the relevance of motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues by all professional staff members regarding students in special education to student success.

Overall, descriptive statistics show accommodations/modifications were considered the most important cluster related to special education students success in the classroom. Accommodations/modifications had the highest mean score of 2.91 on the four-point Likert scale. Social issues was the least important cluster related to special

education students' success in the classroom. Social issues had a mean score of 2.31 on the four-point Likert scale.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics: How Campus Professional Staff Members as a Whole Perceived Motivation, Accommodations/Modifications, Academic Improvements, and Social Issues as Independent Variables to the Success of Special Education Students

Group	n	M	SD
Motivation	802	2.70	0.56
Accommodations/Modifications	814	2.91	0.59
Academic Improvements	824	2.85	0.65
Social Issues	837	2.31	0.75

Table 6 provides the results of the one-way ANOVA. The level of significance for the procedure was 0.001. This was less than the alpha level of 0.05. As a result, the decision was made to reject the null hypotheses of no difference. Therefore, it was inferred that one of the means in the population, from which these sample means were drawn, was different from at least one of the other means. Because this topic, how campus professional staff members perceive students in special education, was disaggregated by four groups, it was necessary to conduct a *post hoc* analysis to determine which mean(s) were different from which other mean(s).

Table 6. ANOVA Results of How Campus Professional Staff Members Perceive Motivation, Accommodations/Modifications, Academic Improvements, and Social Issues of Students in Special Education

Source	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	179.059	3	59.686	141.632	0.001*
Within Groups	1379.305	3273	.421		
Total	1558.364	3276			

*Significant ≤ 0.05.

Table 7 provides the results for the Scheffé *post hoc*. The *post hoc* analysis indicated campus professional staff members had a statistically significant difference in the perceptions between social issues and motivation, academic improvements, and accommodations/modifications. Statistically, there was a significant difference between motivation and academic improvements and accommodations/modifications. Based on these data, social issues was less important than motivation, academic improvements, and accommodations/modifications. Motivation was more important than social issues but less important than academic improvements and accommodations/modifications. Academic improvements and accommodations/modifications were more important than motivation and social issues.

Table 7. Scheffé Results of How Campus Professional Staff Members Perceive Motivation, Accommodations/Modifications, Academic Improvements, and Social Issues of Students in Special Education

Perception	N	Subset (Subset for alpha=0.05) 1	2	3
Social Issues	837	2.3175		
Motivation	802		2.7014	
Academic Improvements	824			2.8544
Accommodations/Modifications	814			2.9134
Sig.		1.000	1.000	.336

Note. Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 investigated how campus professional staff members as a whole perceived the level of motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues when controlling for three student ethnic groups in special education in selected schools in ESC Region 20, Texas. Table 8 reports the overall descriptive statistics of professional staff members' perceptions of the relevance of motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues of Hispanic, African-American, and White students in special education.

Overall, descriptive statistics show accommodations/modifications were considered the most important cluster related to special education students in all three student ethnic groups. Accommodations/modifications had the highest average mean score in each ethnic group on the four-point Likert scale. Social issues was the least important cluster related to special education students' success in the classroom. Social issues had the lowest mean score in each ethnic group on the four-point Likert scale.

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics: Perceptions of the Relevance of Motivation, Accommodations/Modifications, Academic Improvements, and Social Issues of Hispanic, African American, and White Students in Special Education by Professional Staff Members Impacting Student Success

	Hispanic			African American			White		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Motivation	271	2.62	0.48	265	2.47	0.62	266	3.00	0.42
Accommodations/Modifications	275	2.82	0.51	269	2.73	0.71	270	3.17	0.45
Academic Improvements	278	2.75	0.58	273	2.66	0.77	273	3.14	0.48
Social Issues	283	2.15	0.58	277	1.89	0.71	277	2.90	0.57

Ethnic Group: Hispanic

For the ethnic group of Hispanic students, accommodations/modifications had the highest mean score of 2.82 on the four-point Likert scale. Social issues was the least important cluster related to Hispanic special education students' success in the classroom. Social issues had a mean score of 2.15 on the four-point Likert scale.

Table 9 provides the results of the one-way ANOVA. The level of significance for the procedure was 0.001. This was less than the alpha level of 0.05. As a result, the decision was made to reject the null hypotheses of no difference. Therefore, it was inferred that one of the means in the population, from which these sample means were drawn, was different from at least one of the other means. Because this topic, how campus professional staff members perceive Hispanic students in special education special education, was disaggregated by four groups, it was necessary to conduct a *post hoc* analysis to determine which mean(s) were different from which other mean(s).

Table 9. ANOVA Results of How Campus Professional Staff Members Perceive the Level of Motivation, Accommodations/Modifications, Academic Improvements, and Social Issues of Hispanic Students in Special Education

Source	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	76.075	3	25.358	86.472	0.001*
Within Groups	323.463	1103	.293		
Total	399.538	1106			

*Significant ≤ 0.05.

Table 10 provides the results for the Scheffé *post hoc*. The *post hoc* analysis indicated campus professional staff members had a statistically significant difference in the perceptions between social issues and motivation, academic improvements, and accommodations/modifications. Statistically, there was a significant difference between motivation and academic improvements, accommodations/modifications. Based on these data, social issues was less important than motivation, academic improvements, and accommodations/modifications. Motivation was more important than social issues but less important than academic improvements and accommodations/modifications. Academic improvements and accommodations/modifications were more important than motivation and social issues.

Table 10. Scheffé Results of How Campus Professional Staff Members Perceive the Level of Motivation, Accommodations/Modifications, Academic Improvements, and Social Issues of Hispanic Students in Special Education

Perception	N	Subset (Subset for alpha=0.05) 1	2	3
Social Issues	283	2.1572		
Motivation	271		2.6205	
Academic Improvements	278			2.7500
Accommodations/Modifications	275			2.8291
Sig.		1.000	1.000	.400

Ethnic Group: African American

For the African American ethnic group, accommodations/modifications had the highest mean score of 2.73 on the four-point Likert scale. Social issues was the least important cluster related to African American special education students' success in the classroom. Social issues had a mean score of 1.89 on the four-point Likert scale.

Table 11 provides the results of the one-way ANOVA. The level of significance for the procedure was 0.001. This was less than the alpha level of 0.05. As a result, the decision was made to reject the null hypotheses of no difference. Therefore, it was inferred that one of the means in the population, from which these sample means were drawn, was different from at least one of the other means. Because this topic, how campus professional staff members perceive African American students in special education special education, was disaggregated by four groups, it was necessary to conduct a *post hoc* analysis to determine which mean(s) were different from which other mean(s).

Table 11. ANOVA Results of How Campus Professional Staff Members Perceive the Level of Motivation, Accommodations/Modifications, Academic Improvements, and Social Issues of African American Students in Special Education

Source	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	120.396	3	40.132	80.139	0.001*
Within Groups	540.845	1080	.501		
Total	661.241	1083			

*Significant ≤ 0.05.

Table 12 provides the results for the Scheffé *post hoc.* The *post hoc* analysis indicated campus professional staff members had a statistically significant difference in the perceptions between social issues and motivation, academic improvements, and accommodations/modifications. Statistically, there was a significant difference between motivation and academic improvements and accommodations/modifications. Based on these data, social issues was less important than motivation, academic improvements, and accommodations/modifications. Motivation was more important than social issues but less important than academic improvements and accommodations/modifications. Academic improvements and accommodations/modifications were more important than motivation and social issues

Table 12. Scheffé Results of How Campus Professional Staff Members Perceive the Level of Motivation, Accommodations/Modifications, Academic Improvements, and Social Issues of African American Students in Special Education

Perception	N	Subset (Subset for alpha=0.05) 1	2	3
Social Issues	277	1.8953		
Motivation	265		2.4780	
Academic Improvements	273			2.6685
Accommodations/Modifications	269			2.7361
Sig.		1.000	1.000	.745

Ethnic Group: White

For the ethnic group of White students, accommodations/modifications had the highest mean score of 3.17 on the four-point Likert scale. Social issues was the least important cluster related to White special education students' success in the classroom. Social issues had a mean score of 2.90 on the four-point Likert scale. In all three student ethnic groups, it is important to note accommodations/modifications were considered more important to student success than academic improvements, motivation, and social issues.

Table 13 provides the results of the one-way ANOVA. The level of significance for the procedure was 0.001. This was less than the alpha level of 0.05. As a result, the decision was made to reject the null hypotheses of no difference. Therefore, it was inferred that one of the means in the population, from which these sample means were drawn, was different from at least one of the other means. Because this topic, how campus professional staff members perceive White students in special education special

education, was disaggregated by four groups, it was necessary to conduct a *post hoc* analysis to determine which mean(s) were different from which other mean(s).

Table 13. ANOVA Results of How Campus Professional Staff Members Perceive the Level of Motivation, Accommodations/Modifications, Academic Improvements, and Social Issues of White Students in Special Education

Source	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	13.224	3	4.408	18.432	0.001*
Within Groups	258.752	1082	.239		
Total	271.975	1085			

*Significant ≤ 0.05.

Table 14 provides the results of the Scheffé *post hoc.* The *post hoc* analysis indicated campus professional staff members had a statistically significant difference in the perceptions between social issues, motivation, and academic improvements, accommodations/modifications. Statistically, there was a significant difference between social issues, motivation, and academic improvements and accommodations/ modifications. Based on these data, social issues and motivation were less important than academic improvements, accommodations/modifications. Academic improvements and accommodations/modifications were more important than motivation and social issues.

Table 14. Scheffé Results of How Campus Professional Staff Members Perceive the Level of Motivation, Accommodations/Modifications, Academic Improvements, and Social Issues of White Students in Special Education

Perception	N	Subset (Subset for alpha=0.05) 1	2
Social Issues	277	2.9034	
Motivation	266	3.0063	
Academic Improvements	273		3.1465
Accommodations/Modifications	270		3.1759
Sig.		.112	.921

Research Question 3

For Research Question 3, descriptive statistics were also employed to investigate how campus professional staff members perceived the level of motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues when controlling for the four organizational roles in selected schools in ESC Region 20, Texas. Table 15 reports the overall descriptive statistics of perceptions of the relevance of motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues by special education teachers, regular education teachers, other teachers, and administrators on students in special education impacting student success.

Table 15. Descriptive Statistics: Perceptions of the Relevance of Motivation, Accommodations/Modifications, Academic Improvements, and Social Issues by Special Education Teachers, Regular Education Teachers, Other Teachers, and Administrators on Students in Special Education Impacting Student Success

	Special Education			Regular Education			Other			Administrators		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Motivation	120	2.67	0.50	426	2.69	0.57	112	2.62	0.58	135	2.81	0.49
Accommodation/ Modification	128	2.77	0.56	427	2.87	0.60	115	3.04	0.67	135	3.04	0.48
Academic Improvements	127	2.87	0.57	435	2.75	0.66	118	3.01	0.74	135	2.98	0.57
Social Issues	129	2.37	0.79	446	2.35	0.71	118	2.08	0.82	135	2.31	0.77

The descriptive statistics indicated campus professional staff perception of the level of support for the four cluster groups of all students in special education when controlling for the four organizational roles. Regular education teachers, administrators, and others indicated accommodations/modifications to have the highest mean score of the four clusters of support on a four-point Likert scale. The descriptive findings revealed a difference regarding special education teachers. Special education teachers indicated academic improvements to have the highest mean score of the four clusters of support. Each organizational role indicated social issues to have the lowest mean score on a four-point Likert scale.

Organizational Role: Special Education Teacher

For the organizational role of special education teacher**,** academic improvements (differentiated instruction) had the highest mean score of 2.87 on the four-point Likert scale. Social issues was the least important cluster related to special education students'

success in the classroom. Social issues had a mean score of 2.15 on the four-point Likert scale.

Table 16 provides the results of the one-way ANOVA. The level of significance for the procedure was 0.001. This was less than the alpha level of 0.05. As a result, the decision was made to reject the null hypotheses of no difference. Therefore, it was inferred that one of the means in the population, from which these sample means were drawn, was different from at least one of the other means. Because this topic, how campus special education teachers perceive students in special education, was disaggregated by four groups, it was necessary to conduct a *post hoc* analysis to determine which mean(s) were different from which other mean(s).

Table 16. ANOVA Results of How Campus Special Education Teachers Perceive the Level of Motivation, Accommodations/Modifications, Academic Improvements, and Social Issues of Students in Special Education

Source	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	18.041	3	6.014	15.669	0.001*
Within Groups	191.894	500	.384		
Total	209.934	503			

*Significant ≤ 0.05.

Table 17 provides the results for the Scheffé *post hoc*. The *post hoc* analysis indicated campus special education teachers had a statistically significant difference in the perceptions between social issues and motivation, academic improvements, and accommodations/modifications. Based on these data, statistically, social issues were less

important than motivation, academic improvements, and accommodations/modifications. Motivation, academic improvements, and accommodations/modifications were more important than social issues. Special education teachers felt that academic improvements (differentiated instruction) were more important to student success than accommodations/modifications, motivation, and social issues.

Table 17. Scheffé Results of How Campus Special Education Teachers Perceive the Level of Motivation, Accommodations/Modifications, Academic Improvements, and Social Issues of Students in Special Education

Perception	N	Subset (Subset for alpha=0.05) 1	2
Social Issues	129	2.3760	
Motivation	120		2.6778
Academic Improvements	128		2.7786
Accommodations/Modifications	127		2.8760
Sig.		1.000	.093

Organizational Role: Regular Education Teacher

For the organizational role of regular education teacher, accommodation/ modifications had the highest mean score of 2.87 on the four-point Likert scale. Social issues was the least important cluster related to special education students' success in the classroom. Social issues had a mean score of 2.35 on the four-point Likert scale.

Table 18 provides the results of the one-way ANOVA. The level of significance for the procedure was 0.001. This was less than the alpha level of 0.05. As a result, the decision was made to reject the null hypotheses of no difference. Therefore, it was

inferred that one of the means in the population, from which these sample means were drawn, was different from at least one of the other means. Because this topic, how campus regular education teachers perceive students in special education, was disaggregated by four groups, it was necessary to conduct a *post hoc* analysis to determine which mean(s) were different from which other mean(s).

Table 18. ANOVA Results of How Campus Regular Education Teachers Perceive the Level of Motivation, Accommodations/Modifications, Academic Improvements, and Social Issues of Students in Special Education

Source	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	64.209	3	21.403	51.930	0.001*
Within Groups	713.013	1730	.412		
Total	777.222	1733			

*Significant ≤ 0.05.

Table 19 provides the results for the Scheffé *post hoc*. The *post hoc* analysis indicated campus regular education teachers had a statistically significant difference in the perceptions between social issues and motivation, academic improvements, and accommodations/modifications. The *post hoc* analysis indicated academic improvements and accommodations/modifications had the same perception. The *post hoc* analysis indicated campus regular education teachers had a statistically significant difference in the perceptions between motivation and accommodations/modifications. Based on these data, statistically, social issues were less important than motivation, academic improvements, and accommodations/modifications. Statistically, motivation, academic

improvements, and accommodations/modifications were more important than social issues. Accommodations/modifications was statistically more important than motivation and social issues. The statistics indicated academic improvements and accommodations/ modifications had the same perception.

Table 19. Scheffé Results of How Campus Regular Education Teachers Perceive the Level of Motivation, Accommodations/Modifications, Academic Improvements, and Social Issues of Students in Special Education

Perception	N	Subset (Subset for alpha=0.05) 1	2	3
Social Issues	446	2.3587		
Motivation	426		2.6917	
Academic Improvements	435		2.7575	2.7575
Accommodations/Modifications	427			2.8724
Sig.		1.000	.518	.074

Organizational Role: Other Teacher

For the organizational role of other teacher**,** accommodations/modifications had the highest mean score of 3.04 on the four-point Likert scale. Social issues was the least important cluster related to special education students' success in the classroom. Social issues had a mean score of 2.08 on the four-point Likert scale.

Table 20 provides the results of the one-way ANOVA. The level of significance for the procedure was 0.001. This was less than the alpha level of 0.05. As a result, the decision was made to reject the null hypotheses of no difference. Therefore, it was inferred that one of the means in the population, from which these sample means were

drawn, was different from at least one of the other means. Because this topic, how other teachers perceive students in special education, was disaggregated by four groups, it was necessary to conduct a *post hoc* analysis to determine which mean(s) were different from which other mean(s).

Table 20. ANOVA Results of How Other Teachers Perceive the Level of Motivation, Accommodations/Modifications, Academic Improvements, and Social Issues of Students in Special Education

Source	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	70.639	3	23.546	46.048	0.001*
Within Groups	234.705	459	.511		
Total	305.344	462			

*Significant ≤ 0.05.

Table 21 provides the results for the Scheffé *post hoc.* The *post hoc* analysis indicated other teachers had a statistically significant difference in the perceptions between social issues and motivation, academic improvements, and accommodations/ modifications. Statistically, there was a significant difference between motivation and academic improvements, accommodations/modifications. Based on these data, social issues was less important than motivation, academic improvements, and accommodations/modifications. Motivation was more important than social issues but less important than academic improvements and accommodations/modifications. Academic improvements and accommodations/modifications were more important than motivation and social issues.

Table 21. Scheffé Results of How Other Teachers Perceive the Level of Motivation, Accommodations/Modifications, Academic Improvements, and Social Issues of Students in Special Education

Perception	N	Subset (Subset for alpha=0.05) 1	2	3
Social Issues	118	2.0847		
Motivation	112		2.6220	
Academic Improvements	118			3.0127
Accommodations/Modifications	115			3.0464
Sig.		1.000	1.000	.988

Organizational Role: Administrator

For the organizational role of administrator, accommodations/modifications had the highest mean score of 3.04 on the four-point Likert scale. Social issues was the least important cluster related to special education students' success in the classroom. Social issues had a mean score of 2.31 on the four-point Likert scale. In three of the four organizational roles, it is important to note accommodations/modifications were considered more important to student success than academic improvements, motivation, and social issues.

Table 22 provides the results of the one-way ANOVA. The level of significance for the procedure was 0.001. This was less than the alpha level of 0.05. As a result, the decision was made to reject the null hypotheses of no difference. Therefore, it was inferred that one of the means in the population, from which these sample means were drawn, was different from at least one of the other means. Because this topic, how

campus administrators perceive students in special education, was disaggregated by four groups, it was necessary to conduct a *post hoc* analysis to determine which mean(s) were different from which other mean(s).

Table 22. ANOVA Results of How Campus Administrators Perceive the Level of Motivation, Accommodations/Modifications, Academic Improvements, and Social Issues of Students in Special Education

Source	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	44.590	3	14.863	41.948	0.001*
Within Groups	189.917	536	.354		
Total	234.506	539			

*Significant ≤ 0.05.

Table 23 provides the results of the Scheffé *post hoc.* The *post hoc* analysis indicated campus administrators had a statistically significant difference in the perceptions between social issues and motivation, academic improvements, and accommodations/modifications. The *post hoc* analysis indicated academic improvements and accommodations/modifications had the same perception. The *post hoc* analysis indicated campus administrators had a statistically significant difference in the perceptions between motivation and accommodations/modifications. Based on these data, statistically, social issues were less important than motivation, academic improvements, and accommodations/modifications. Statistically, motivation, academic improvements, and accommodations/modifications were more important than social issues. Accommodations/modifications was statistically more important than motivation

and social issues. The statistics indicated academic improvements and accommodations/ modifications had the same perception.

Table 23. Scheffé Results of How Campus Administrators Perceive the Level of Motivation, Accommodations/Modifications, Academic Improvements, and Social Issues of Students in Special Education

Perception		Subset (Subset for alpha=0.05)		
	N	1	2	3
Social Issues	135	2.3167		
Motivation	135		2.8185	
Academic Improvements	135		2.9870	2.9870
Accommodations/Modifications	135			3.0481
Sig.		1.000	.145	.870

CHAPTER V

OVERVIEW, FINDINGS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter consists of an overview of the entire study, the findings, conclusions, implications, future recommended research, and a summary of the study. Specifically, the chapter begins with a review of the problem and the type of data that was collected. A brief statement regarding the contents of the review of literature is included. The population from which the sample was drawn is described. Findings from the statistical data are presented. Conclusions based on the research questions are stated in the same order as the research questions were presented in Chapter I. Practical suggestions of what should be done and how it can be done will be addressed. The chapter provides a rationale for why additional research should be done and concludes with a summary of the findings and conclusions.

Overview

This paper has discussed the findings of a quantitative study performed at San Antonio Independent School District, located in Education Service Center Region 20, Texas. The purpose of this study was to compare how campus professionals perceive the level of motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues of students in special education in selected public schools in Education Service Center, Region 20, Texas. The study also investigated those classroom supports with respect to three student ethnic groups as well as the four organizational roles within a school.

Chapter II includes the review of literature. Previous research referencing the positive benefits of the four individual student supports was explored. This study specifically examined motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues and which of those supports was perceived to be the most preferred with students in inclusive classrooms. Previous literature research was limited regarding examination and comparison of the four specific students supports with regards to student ethnic groups and employee organizational roles.

A sampling of educators from the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) represented the urban population for Region 20 and was discussed in Chapter III. Participants from the San Antonio Independent School District were representative of one high school, two middle schools, and four elementary schools. This study had a 72% participation rate.

The results of the survey were analyzed in Chapter IV using a computer software program called SPSS. Chapter V consists of a general overview of the study, summary of the findings and the conclusions drawn from the findings. The chapter includes recommendations for future studies in this area and concludes with a brief summary of the overall study.

The research questions in this study are as follows:

1. How do campus professional staff members as a whole perceive motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues regarding special education students in selected schools in ESC Region 20, Texas?

2. How do campus professional staff members perceive motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues regarding special education students when controlling for three student ethnic groups (Hispanic, African American, and White) in selected schools in ESC Region 20, Texas?
3. How do campus professional staff members perceive motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues regarding special education students when controlling for the four organizational roles (Special Education Teacher, Regular Education Teacher, Other Teacher, and Administrator) in selected schools in ESC Region 20, Texas?

Findings

For Research Question 1, descriptive statistics show accommodations/ modifications were considered the most important cluster related to special education students success in the classroom. Accommodations/modifications had the highest mean score of 2.91 on the four-point Likert scale. The second highest mean score obtained from the data was academic improvements. Academic improvements statistically had a mean score of 2.85 on the Likert scale. Data indicate the third most beneficial support cluster was motivation. Motivation was represented with a mean score of 2.70. Social issues was the least important cluster related to special education students' success in the classroom. Social issues had a mean score of 2.31 on the four-point Likert scale.

Statistically, there was a significant difference between motivation and academic improvements, accommodations/modifications. Based on these data, social issues was less important than motivation, academic improvements, and accommodations/ modifications. Motivation was more important than social issues but less important than academic improvements and accommodations/modifications. Academic improvements and accommodations/modifications were more important than motivation and social issues. The descriptive findings indicated that the majority of participants consider accommodations/modifications to be the most beneficial support method used to enhance student success with special education students.

Research Question 2 reports the overall descriptive statistics of professional staff members' perceptions of the relevance of motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues of Hispanic, African-American, and White students in special education. For the ethnic group of Hispanic students, accommodations/modifications had the highest mean score of 2.82 on the four-point Likert scale. Academic improvements was the second highest support cluster among Hispanic students. The mean score for the Hispanic groups was 2.75. Motivation scored as the third support group with a mean score of 2.62. Social issues was the least important cluster related to Hispanic special education students' success in the classroom. Social issues had a mean score of 2.15 on the four-point Likert scale.

For the African American ethnic group, accommodations/modifications had the highest mean score of 2.73 on the four-point Likert scale. Academic improvements was the second highest support cluster among African American students. The mean score

for academic improvements in the African American student cluster was 2.66. Motivation scored as the third support group with a mean score of 2.47. Social issues was the least important cluster related to African American special education students' success in the classroom. Social issues had a mean score of 1.89 on the four-point Likert scale.

For the ethnic group of White students, accommodations/modifications had the highest mean score of 3.17 on the four-point Likert scale. Academic improvements was the second highest support cluster among White students. The mean score for the White groups was 3.14. Motivation scored as the third support cluster with a mean score of 3.00. Social issues was the least important cluster related to White special education students' success in the classroom. Social issues had a mean score of 2.90 on the four-point Likert scale.

For all three students ethnic groups, accommodations/modifications and academic improvements were more important than motivation and social issues. Social issues and motivation were less important than accommodations/modifications and academic improvements.

Research Question 3 reports the overall descriptive statistics of perceptions of motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues by special education teachers, regular education teachers, others, and administrators on students in special education impacting student success. For the organizational role of special education teacher**,** academic improvements (differentiated instruction) had the highest mean score of 2.87 on the four-point Likert scale. Accommodations/

modifications was the second highest support cluster among special education teachers. The mean score for special education teachers was 2.77. Motivation scored as the third support group with a mean score of 2.67. Social issues was the least important cluster related to special education students' success in the classroom. Social issues had a mean score of 2.15 on the four-point Likert scale among special education teachers.

For the organizational role of regular education teacher**,** accommodations/ modifications had the highest mean score of 2.87 on the four-point Likert scale. Academic improvements was the second highest support cluster among regular education teachers. The mean score for regular education teachers was 2.75. Motivation scored as the third support group among regular education teachers with a mean score of 2.69. Social issues was the least important cluster related to special education students' success in the classroom. Social issues had a mean score of 2.35 on the four-point Likert scale among regular education teachers.

For the organizational role of other teacher accommodations/modifications had the highest mean score of 3.04 on the four-point Likert scale. Academic improvements was the second highest support cluster among other teachers. The mean score for other teachers was 3.01. Motivation scored as the third support group among regular education teachers with a mean score of 2.62. Social issues was the least important cluster related to special education students' success in the classroom. According to other teachers, social issues had a mean score of 2.08 on the four-point Likert scale.

For the organizational role of administrator, accommodations/modifications had the highest mean score of 3.04 on the four-point Likert scale. Academic improvements

was the second highest support cluster among administrators. The mean score for administrators was 2.98. Motivation scored as the third support group among administrators with a mean score of 2.81. Social issues was the least important cluster related to special education students' success in the classroom according to administrators. Social issues had a mean score of 2.31 on the four-point Likert scale.

Conclusions

All children with disabilities have access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment after The Education for All Handicapped Children Act was passed in 1975. Public education was transformed even more in 1997 when amendments were added forming The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) by passing Public Law 105-17. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) became law in 2002 and the nation's special education law was again revised and renamed. The new law was called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA).

Prior to these laws that helped to guide schools in teaching students with exceptionalities in the general education setting, states were left to fend for themselves as far as teaching program adaptations. IDEIA opened the door for students with disabilities to receive special education in an inclusive environment. Over the last 15 years, the number of students being serviced under the special education umbrella has grown tremendously. Mandated by federal law, now more than ever, children in special education programs are being serviced in the general education classroom with the least amount of restrictions imposed on the student. In 2005, the U.S. Department of Education reported about 75% of students in special education programs were fully or

partially participating in general education inclusive classrooms (Thompson, Johnstone, Thurlow, & Altman, 2005). Public schools are now being held accountable in new and significant ways for the education of all students.

There continues to be considerable debate regarding the philosophy of inclusive classrooms and the use of student supports. The success of students in general education inclusive classrooms depends on several variables, including educators' attitudes regarding the inclusion of these students in their classrooms. This study specifically examined professional educators' attitudes regarding four student supports (motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues) for students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. In addition, the goals of this study included public school educators' attitudes toward the aforementioned four areas of support specifically within three student ethnic groups (Hispanic, African American, and Whites). The final goal of the study was to compare the attitudes of each of the organizational roles (administrators, general education teachers, special education teachers, and others) regarding motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues of students with disabilities participating in general education inclusive classrooms. The goal of this study was to identify educators' beliefs indicating the most preferred support for students with disabilities in the inclusive school setting.

Prior research studies that examined educators' attitudes regarding instructional practices and adaptations to support students with disabilities in the mainstream reveal that teachers and administrators prefer to first support students with classroom

accommodations and curriculum modifications (Baker & Zigmond, 1995; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998; Leyser, Kapperman, & Keller, 1994; McIntosh, Vaughan, Schumm, Haager, & Lee, 1993; Schumm & Vaughan, 1991). The results of this study are supplementary to previous findings examining teachers' perceptions of accommodations/modifications. More specifically, the data from this research indicate educators perceive accommodations/ modifications to be the most beneficial support to offer all students with disabilities in the general education inclusive classroom. In addition, as referenced in Chapter II, Lee et al. (2006) reminds us implementing accommodations/modifications will result in greater understanding of concepts by students and higher success rates for students in the inclusive classroom. In the review of literature, Williams (2001) found that students benefit greatly from individualized accommodations/modifications when they are based on their individual learning styles, strengths, and needs. Williams (2001) insists students gain confidence when teachers adapt and allow them to demonstrate what they learned. As a result, providing students with accommodations/modifications that support learning is a critical part of teaching. It is imperative that teachers know what individual accommodations/modifications are appropriate for students whose disabilities interfere with learning in the classroom.

Additionally, this study specifically adds to prior research indicating educators perceive accommodations/modifications to be the primary focus of support in the mainstream setting particularly within three students' ethnic groups (Hispanic, African American, and Whites). In the past, there has been some research exploring gender preferences and educators' attitudes regarding the mainstreaming of students with

disabilities (Thyer, Parrish, Curtis, Nesse, & Cameron, 1985). There also have even been studies that explored elementary teachers' views toward inclusive classrooms as compared to secondary teachers' views (Larrivee & Cook, 1979; Leyser, Kapperman & Keller, 1994; Savage & Wienke, 1989). The research, however, is limited on studies that examined educators' attitudes toward student supports in the general education classroom within an identified ethnic group. The results of this study reveal no difference in educators' attitudes within the three student ethnic groups. The findings from this research reveal that educators perceive accommodations/modifications to be the most beneficial support to offer all students with disabilities in the general education inclusive classroom, regardless of ethnic origin. Since all students' ethnic groups are perceived to benefit greatly from instructional and curriculum accommodations/ modifications, it remains extremely important for students' teachers to be provided with their individual accommodations/modifications so that their learning is supported in the inclusive classroom. Teachers must be familiar with IEP recommended individual accommodations/modifications for students whose disabilities interfere with learning in their classroom. In fact, it is mandated by federal law.

The third area of data analyzed from this study indicate three of the four specific organizational roles examined clearly perceive accommodations/modifications to be the most beneficial support to implement for students with disabilities in the inclusive setting. In particular, the findings from this research reveal administrators, general education teachers, and other professionals in the school believe the primary focus for student support in the inclusive classroom should be on incorporating appropriate

accommodations/modifications. In today's schools, administrators, as well as teachers, are being held accountable in new and significant ways for the education of all students. Prior research has shown that the implementation of accommodations/modifications plays an increasingly supportive role in assisting administrators to raise test scores and for students to be successful in the general education classroom (Luke & Schwartz, 2007). Luke and Schwartz (2007) found that accommodations/modifications play a significant role in helping students with disabilities in the general education classroom as well as in state assessment situations. However, it is important to note that Polloway, Epstein and Bursuck (2003) contend that teachers could possibly be reluctant to make such accommodations for students in special education inclusive programs, if they have not been specifically trained in that area. Adding to Polloway, Epstein, and Bursuck (2003), Swanson and Deschler (2003) contend that providing supports for educators with specific training on how to incorporate accommodations/modifications is essential for every district. Hequet (2006) also reported there should be numerous professional development seminars available every school year to train public school administrators and teachers on ways to modify content and implement classroom accommodations to improve and maintain the overall performance of students and school test scores. Wong (2001) reminds us that every student can probably benefit from accommodations/modifications at some point in their education. Wong (2001) further stated that public school administrators and teachers consistently implementing student accommodations/modifications results in all students having true access to the general curriculum in the least restrictive environment. Stone and Brown (1987) found without

the use of curriculum and instructional adaptations for students in the inclusive setting, the probability of academic success is diminished greatly.

Interestingly, this study indicated the organizational role of special education teachers to perceive academic improvements (differentiated instruction) as their first preference of student support for children with disabilities. It is possible there is a connection with previous research regarding special education teachers' attitudes toward mainstreaming. Leyser, Kapperman, and Keller (1994) noted that special education teachers as compared to general education teachers believe they are more competent to teach students with disabilities. Special education teachers have been found to feel better prepared in implementing classroom adaptations, curriculum modifications, and instructional accommodations for these students that are in the inclusive classroom (Blanton, Blanton, & Cross, 1994; Bear & Minke, 1996; Whinnery, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 1991).

Finally, the data from this study add to the literature regarding educators' perceptions of social issues as a support in the mainstream. The results indicate only after teachers incorporate accommodations/modifications and differentiate instruction, do they perceive the social and emotional well-being of students with disabilities in the mainstream setting to be a beneficial support. These findings add to previous research studies as well. Leyser, Kapperman, and Keller (1994) found that student supports, such as a motivating teacher, a supportive learning atmosphere, encouraging student attempts, and establishing personal relationships are perceived to be important but only after

accommodations/ modifications and academic improvements are incorporated in the mainstream inclusive classroom.

Some researchers reported that teachers prefer adaptations related to motivational and social issues as an additional focus for student support in the mainstream classroom behind accommodations/modifications and academic improvements (Ellett, 1993; Johnson, Pugach, & Devlin, 1990; Schumm & Vaughan, 1991).

While considerable debate continues regarding teachers' perceptions of inclusion classrooms and the most preferred student supports, it is clear from this study that educators' (administrators, general education teachers, and other professionals) attitudes and practices regarding mainstreaming of students with disabilities from three student ethnic groups (Hispanic, African American, and Whites) are first focused on implementing instructional accommodations and curriculum modifications in the general education inclusive classroom. Even though a student's recommended accommodations/ modifications can be found in the IEP, that does not automatically guarantee student success. All educators must have the knowledge, skills, and ability to implement the individual accommodations/modifications that are provided to them for student supports to be effective (Hequet, 2006). Consistent implementation of accommodations/ modifications will allow for students to show what they have learned and what they can do (Luke & Schwartz, 2007).

Implications

As the research suggests**,** instructional accommodations, and curriculum modifications play a significant role in the learning environment, especially for students

with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Therefore, it is imperative for schools to have a system in place that assures educators have access to a student's recommended accommodations/modifications found in their IEP. How can this feat be accomplished in an efficient and effective way? One recommendation for the district participating in this research study is to invest in a district-wide special education automated software program. Confidential special education information regarding the student can be stored and readily accessible at all times. The use of an automated software program in schools will help to ensure IEP recommended accommodations/modifications for students are being provided to educators. This software program not only will comply with IDEA regulations, it can assist teachers in managing and tracking special education students' information and progress.

A second recommendation is for the Department of Human Resources to offer implement yearly professional development/training regarding accommodations/ modifications. The Department of Human Resources should offer numerous professional development seminars to train public school teachers, and administrators on ways to modify content and implement instructional accommodations before the school year begins. It is essential that educators be provided training in order to gain the ability and skills necessary to implement a student's accommodations/modifications. Administrators, general education teachers, special education teachers and other professionals that have contact with the students will be better prepared to meet the increasing demands of teaching in the inclusive classroom if they have participated in professional development seminars regarding accommodations/modifications.

Fundamentally, consistent implementation of accommodations/modifications can have a positive effect and improve outcomes for students in the classroom. Instructional accommodations and curriculum modifications can be the key to unlocking a student's knowledge and skills for some teachers and students. Consistent implementation of appropriate accommodations/modifications in the classroom will also show students with disabilities what they know in regular assessment situations as well. Human resource development training in the area of accommodations/modifications might be well worth it for the school district. The use of accommodations/modifications can result in success for the student, teacher, school, district, and state-based assessment accountability ratings.

A final recommendation for the district to consider is to adopt an instructional model where students keep the same teacher for three years in a row, especially in the elementary grades. By using this instructional model, teachers will already be familiar with their students' accommodations/modifications and learning characteristics. As a result, educators can immediately implement instructional accommodations and curriculum modifications that will maximize their students learning. After all, teachers require time to implement appropriate accommodations and modifications (Butzin, Carroll, & Lutz, 2006).

Finally, this study raises the issue of human resource development as a competitive advantage. When educators are fully trained and prepared, they will illustrate the important issues in organization and learning span organizational levels. This approach provides a platform to further investigate each of the areas at a deeper

level of understanding. The approach may help forge a better academic description and prescriptions and the reality faced by educators.

Organizational learning is a philosophical framework that holds considerable promise for improving organizational effectiveness. Each of these areas can be partitioned into processes and sub-processes, many of which have been identified in the literature. Human resource professionals are uniquely positioned to facilitate organizational learning because they are recognized as learning specialists. The key for human resource professionals in school districts is to reframe learning in order to meet the new challenges of education.

Future Research

The following are recommendations for further research related to human resource development:

1. A research study that examines student gender with regards to student supports implemented in public schools in Texas.
2. A research study that focuses on the results of implementing a yearly schedule where elementary students keep the same teacher for a minimum of three years consecutively.
3. A research study investigating preferences of educator's gender regarding student supports in inclusive classrooms.
4. A research study investigating the effects of student supports regarding biracial, Indian, and Asian students in public schools in Texas.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to identify educators' beliefs indicating the most preferred support for students with disabilities in the general education classroom setting. This study examined professional educators' attitudes regarding four student supports (motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues) for students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. In addition, the goals of this study included public school educators' attitudes toward the aforementioned four areas of support specifically within three student ethnic groups (Hispanic, African American, and Whites). The final goal of the study was to compare the attitudes of each of the organizational roles (administrators, general education teachers, special education teachers, and others) regarding motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues of students with disabilities participating in general education inclusive classrooms.

The findings from this research indicate (a) educators perceive accommodations/ modifications to be the most beneficial support to offer all students with disabilities in the general education inclusive classroom; (b) educators perceive accommodations/ modifications to be the most beneficial support to offer all students with disabilities in the general education inclusive classroom, regardless of ethnic origin. The results of this study reveal no difference in educators' attitudes within the three student ethnic groups; (c) administrators, general education teachers, and the organizational role of other professionals in the school believe the primary focus for student support in the inclusive classroom should be on incorporating appropriate accommodations/modifications; and

(d) special education teachers perceive academic improvements (differentiated instruction) as their first preference of student support for children with disabilities in the inclusive classroom.

The overall findings in this study clearly reveal a pattern of educators' preferences regarding the four student supports for students in special education programs. Accommodations/modifications are the first focus of support for educators to implement, followed by academic improvements (differentiated instruction). The pattern continues with educators indicating motivation to be the third student support and the fourth preference was social issues.

Some of the results of this study are supplementary to previous findings examining teachers' perceptions of accommodations/modifications. Additionally, this study particularly adds to prior research indicating educators perceive accommodations/ modifications to be the primary focus of support in the general education inclusive setting particularly within three students' ethnic groups (Hispanic, African American, and Whites). The research was limited on studies that examined educators' attitudes toward student supports in the general education classroom within an identified ethnic group. The results of this study reveal no difference in educators' attitudes regarding motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues within the three student ethnic groups. Finally, the data from this research reveal administrators, general education teachers, and other professionals in the school believe the primary focus for student support in the inclusive classroom should be on incorporating appropriate accommodations/modifications. Previous literature had

minimal studies examining specific organizational roles perceptions regarding motivation, accommodations/modifications, academic improvements, and social issues were minimal.

In summary, we must remember that student learning is the goal of school. Assessing students is one way we find out if our students have learned. For all students, especially those with disabilities, being able to show what has been learned is greatly enhanced when educators consistently implement appropriate instructional accommodations/modifications in the classroom as well as in testing situations.

When educators are provided with student accommodations/modifications, followed by professional development seminars focusing on how to implement those accommodations/modifications, these supports can have positive results for students, which is reason enough to use them. These accommodations/modifications can be beneficial for the school as well. Teachers, schools, and districts are all being held accountable for yearly progress. It is important for schools to consider all options, especially implementing accommodations/modifications, which allow students to demonstrate what they have learned and perform better in testing situations. The most beneficial aspect of implementing accommodations and modifications is that they truly can help students learn. Giving students the recommended tools necessary for classroom success and to show what they know in an assessment situation, means they are genuinely included in the world of education.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

"Perceptions of Educational Professionals about Special Education Students"

DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender: _____ **Male** _____ **Female**

Ethnicity: _____ **African American** _____ **Hispanic** _____ **White** _____ **Other**

Organizational Level: _____ **Elementary** _____ **Middle** _____ **High**

Organizational role: _____ **Special Ed. Teacher** _____ **Regular Ed. Teacher** _____ **Other Teacher**
_____ **Administrator**

Circle one option (**SD/D/A/SA**) for each ethnic group.
Each statement needs three circles. Please be sure all groups are marked for each statement.
Key: **SD** = Strongly Disagree, **D** = Disagree, **A** = Agree, **SA** = Strongly Agree

I. MOTIVATION *As* an educator, I believe Special Education students...	**Hispanic**	**African-American**	**White**
1. are intrinsically (self-initiated) motivated.	SD D A SA	SD D A SA	SD D A SA
2. respond positively to extrinsic encouragement.	SD D A SA	SD D A SA	SD D A SA
3. receive strong, positive peer acceptance.	SD D A SA	SD D A SA	SD D A SA
4. receive strong, positive parental support.	SD D A SA	SD D A SA	SD D A SA
5. benefit from consistent, affirming, faith-based activities.	SD D A SA	SD D A SA	SD D A SA
6. are more motivated under the no pass-no play rule.	SD D A SA	SD D A SA	SD D A SA
II. ACCOMMODATIONS/MODIFICATIONS As an educator, I believe Special Education students...			
7. benefit from extra time for oral assignments.	SD D A SA	SD D A SA	SD D A SA
8. benefit from extra time for written assignments.	SD D A SA	SD D A SA	SD D A SA
9. benefit from shorter assignments.	SD D A SA	SD D A SA	SD D A SA
10. benefit from speech therapy for articulation problems	SD D A SA	SD D A SA	SD D A SA
11. benefit from small groups.	SD D A SA	SD D A SA	SD D A SA
12. benefit from colored overlays for dyslexia.	SD D A SA	SD D A SA	SD D A SA
III. ACADEMIC IMPROVEMENTS *As* an educator, I believe Special Education students...			
13. benefit by participation in UIL-based academic programs and contests.	SD D A SA	SD D A SA	SD D A SA
14. benefit from hands-on learning activities.	SD D A SA	SD D A SA	SD D A SA
15. benefit from in-class discussions.	SD D A SA	SD D A SA	SD D A SA
16. benefit from portfolio assessments.	SD D A SA	SD D A SA	SD D A SA
IV. SOCIAL ISSUES As an educator, I believe Special Education students...			
17. are active participants in campus clubs and/or organizations.	SD D A SA	SD D A SA	SD D A SA
18. are active participants in campus governance (e.g., class officers and Student Council).	SD D A SA	SD D A SA	SD D A SA
19. have friends from all intellectual levels.	SD D A SA	SD D A SA	SD D A SA
20. participate in a variety of socially responsible activities.	SD D A SA	SD D A SA	SD D A SA

Thank you for your time and insight!
Please return the survey to main office drop box, by October 13, 2006.

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO SUPERINTENDENTS

Nancy Jean Faldik

Dr. Ruben Olivarez
San Antonio Independent School District
141 Lavaca Street
San Antonio, Texas 78210

I hereby request permission to conduct research in your school district. The purpose of this research is to explore the influence of special education on educational support of ethnic students as perceived by administrators and teachers in selected elementary schools in Education Service Center, Region 20, Texas.

No reference will be made to your district or to any specific campus, administrator, or teacher in the study. The study will make reference to the perceptions of administrators and teachers as a whole in Education Service Center, Region 20, Texas.

All information will remain confidential and collection procedures will be in strict adherence of board policy. This research will be used in the form of a dissertation to fulfill the requirements of a doctoral degree in Educational Human Resource Development from Texas A&M University.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

With appreciation,

Nancy Faldik
Doctoral Candidate
Texas A&M University

Dr. Kenneth Paprock
Committee Chair
Texas A&M University

APPENDIX C

INFORMATION SHEET

The Influence of Special Education on Education Support of Ethnic Students as Perceived by Administrators and Teachers in Selected Public Schools in Education Service Center, Region 20, Texas

You have been asked to participate in a research study including selected demographic variables of administrators and teachers, factors impacting motivation, accommodations, modifications, academic achievement, and social issues of ethnic students in special education. You were selected to be a possible participant because of your experience in the field of education. A total of 275 people have been asked to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to collect information regarding the feelings, motivation, attitudes, accomplishments, knowledge and experiences of individuals by asking the same questions of all respondents in the sample.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to answer all or as many of the questions possible on the survey. Survey packets will be delivered to each selected elementary school by the researcher and will be placed in the participants' mailboxes or given to the administrator in charge of that campus for distribution to the participants. The participants will be asked to return the information letter and survey in the same envelope. This study will take place October 2 through October 13, 2006. The packet will include the information sheet and the survey instrument. The administrators will be informed prior to distributing the forms that the participants could return the survey to the office drop box. The risks of this study include discomfort and stress. The seriousness of risk is no more than minimal risk. There are no benefits to participation. You will receive no monetary compensation. The survey could be completed in 5-20 minutes

This study is anonymous. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be securely stored and only Nancy Faldik will have access to the records. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Texas A&M University. If you decide to paticipate, you are free to refuse to answer any of the questions that may make you uncomfortable. You can withdraw at any time without your relations with the University, job, benefits, etc., being affected. You can contact Kenneth Paprock at kpaprock@hotmail.com with any questions about this study.

This research study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board – Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, you can contact the Institutional Review Board through Ms. Angelia M. Raines, Director of Research Compliance, Office of the Vice President for Research at (979) 458-4067, araines@vprmail.tamu.edu.

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received your answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the information sheet for your records.

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

VITA

Nancy Jean Faldik
1700 N. Alamo, Ste. 300
San Antonio, Texas 78215

EDUCATION

2011	Doctor of Philosophy Educational Human Resource Development Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas
1979	Master of Science Educational Administration Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas
1977	Bachelor of Science Physical Education and Health Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas

CERTIFICATIONS (State of Texas)

Professional Mid-Management (Life)
Provisional Mental Retardation Special Education (Life)

EXPERIENCE

2006 – Present	Alamo Community College District San Antonio, Texas Adjunct Faculty (Northwest Vista College)
1996 – Present	San Antonio Independent School District San Antonio, Texas Special Education Supervisor
1995 – 1980	San Antonio Independent School District San Antonio, Texas Special Education Teacher (Cooper Middle School)
1979 – 1977	San Antonio Independent School District San Antonio, Texas General Education Teacher (Lanier High School)

This dissertation was typed and edited by Marilyn M. Oliva at Action Ink, Inc.